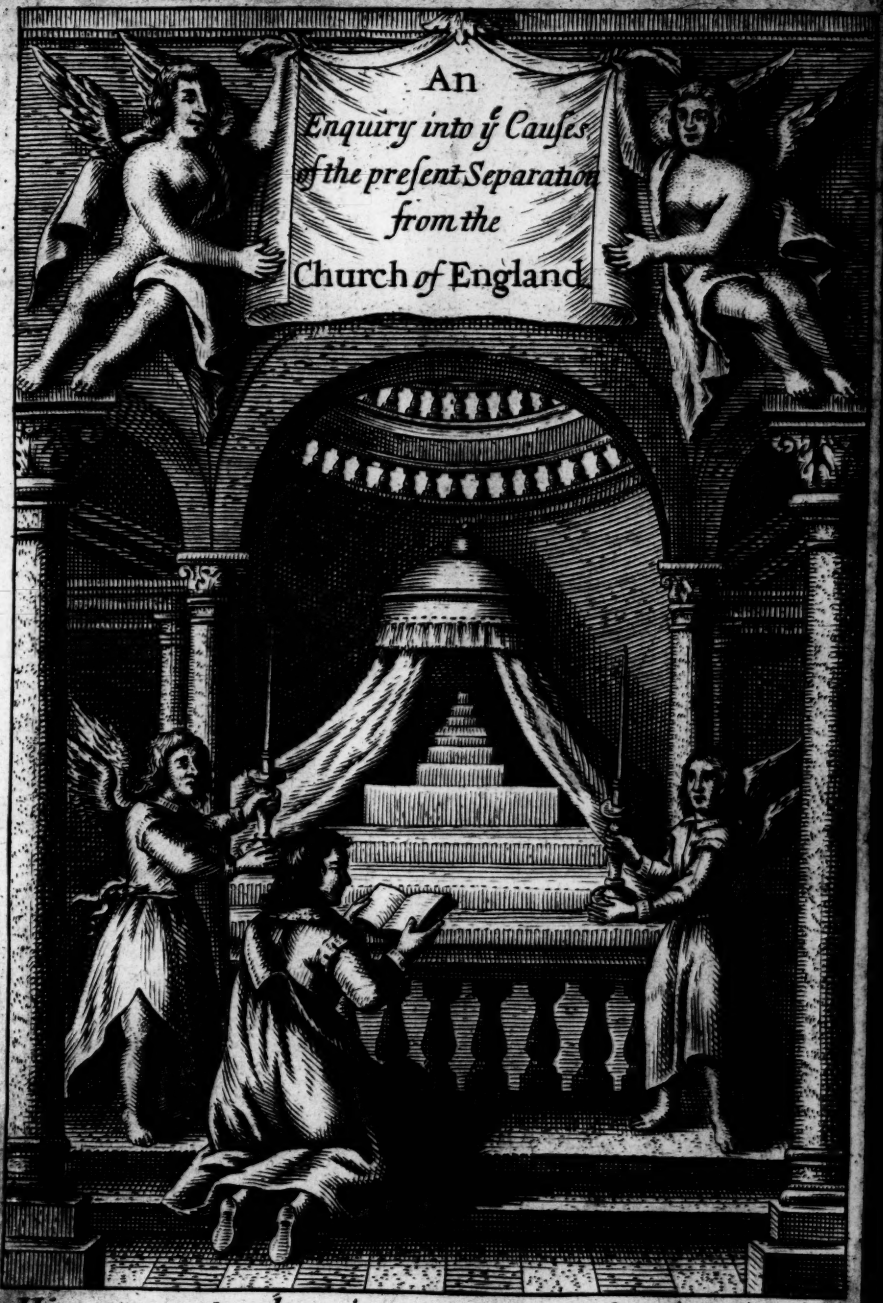

Hic verus est cultus, in quo mens colentis, seipsam Deo immaculatam victimam sistit. Lact.

A *Serious* and *Compaſsionate*

INQUIRY

Into the *Cauſes* of the *preſent Neglect* and *Contempt* of the

Proteſtant Religion AND CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

WITH

Several ſeaſonable Conſiderations offer'd to all *Engliſh* Proteſtants, tending to perſwade them to a Complyance with and Conformity to the Religion and Government of this Church as it is eſtabliſhed by the Laws of the KINGDOM.

Tertul. Scorpiac. adv. Gnoſtic.

Non in occaſione fruſtrandi Martyrii jubet te (Apoſtolus, ſcil.) *ſubjici Magiſtratibus, ſed in provocatione bene vivendi Sine ira & ſtudio, quorum cauſas procul habeo.* Tacit. Ann. 1.

London, Printed by *Robert White* for *Richard Royſton*, Bookſeller to His moſt Sacred Majeſty, at the *Angel* in *Amen-Corner*. MDCLXXIV.

INſtead of an Epiſtle to the Reader, as the manner is, I humbly ſubmit the enſuing Diſcourſe to the Cenſure of my Superiours in the Church of England, and to the conſideration of all the Non-conformiſts of whatſoever Sect or Denomination: hoping the former will pardon the defects of it; and that the latter may (by Gods bleſſing) reap ſome benefit by it.

316

THE

CONTENTS.

THE INTRODUCTION.

Wherein the Antient Estate of Christianity in general is compared with the present; and the Condition of the Reformed Religion in this Kingdom in the first times of it, is compared with that of the present Age; And the Change lamented.

The Contents.

PART I.

An Enquiry into the Cauſes and Origin of the Separation from and Contempt of the English *Reformed Church.*

CHAP. I.

Wherein are repreſented ſeveral things that are pretended, but are not the true Cauſes *of our diſtractions and diſſatisfactions*; viz. 1. *Corruption in Doctrine*; 2. *The too near approach of this Church to the* Roman; 3. *The Scandalouſneſs of the Clergy: All which are diſproved.* pag. 1.

CHAP. II.

Of the more remote and leſs obſerved Cauſes of the infelicity of this Church; ſuch as 1. *The*

The Contents.

1. *The Reign of Queen* Mary *and return of Popery under her in the Infancy of the Reformation.* 2. *The bad proviſion for Miniſters in Corporations,* &c. 3. *Frequent Wars.* 4. *The liberty in Religion that Trade ſeems to require.* 5. *The ſecret deſigns of Atheiſts and Papiſts.* p. 30.

CHAP. III.

Of the more immediate Cauſes of the Diſtractions of the Church of England; *ſuch as,* 1. *Raſhneſs of popular Judgement.* 2. *Judaiſm.* 3. *Prejudice.* 4. *Want of true Chriſtian Zeal, in the generality of its Members.* p. 56.

PART II.

Wherein ſeveral ſerious Conſiderations are propounded, tending to perſwade all Engliſh *Proteſtants to comply with, and conform to, the Religion and Government of this Church, as it is eſtabliſhed by Law.*

CHAP. I.

A Reflection upon divers Wayes or Methods for the Prevention and Cure of Church-Diviſions. p. 85.

CHAP. II.

Of the true notion of Schiſm, the ſin and miſchievous conſequents of it. p. 105.

CHAP.

The Contents.

CHAP. III.

Of the nature and importance of those things that are ſcrupled, or objected againſt in this Church; and that they are ſuch as may without ſin be ſacrificed to Peace, and therefore cannot excuſe us from ſin in ſeparating from the Church upon their account. p. 121.

CHAP. IV.

That thoſe that find fault with the Conſtitution of this Church, will never be able to find out or agree upon a better. p. 140.

CHAP. V.

That God layes very little ſtreſs upon Circumſtantials in Religion. p. 151.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

That the Magiſtrate hath Authority to determine ſuch Externals of Religion as are the matters of our diſputes, and what deportment is due from Chriſtians towards him. p. 159.

CHAP. VII.

Wherein Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts; and that it doth not diſcharge us from Obedience to Laws. p. 175.

CHAP. VIII.

Of a Tender Conſcience, what it is, and its Priviledges. p. 190.

CHAP.

The Contents.

CHAP. IX.

The great dishonour that disobedience to Laws and Magistrates, and the distractions of Government do to any Profession of Religion whatsoever. p. 212.

CHAP. X.

The danger by our Distractions and Divisions. p. 223.

The Conclusion. p. 240.

THE INTRODUCTION.

WHEREIN

The Antient eſtate of Chriſtianity in general is compared with the preſent; and the Condition of the Reformed Religion in this Kingdom in the firſt times of it, is compared with that of the preſent Age; And the Change lamented.

Whoſoever ſeriouſly conſiders the Certainty and Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion in its own nature, and withal obſerves with how juſt Veneration it was received, with what Ardour imbraced, with what Courage and Conſtancy maintained and practiſed, then,

then, when all the Powers on Earth ſought to ſuppreſs it, when the Wit and Malice of the World was combined againſt it, and when to be a Chriſtian, was the plain way to ruine, and the loſs of whatſoever uſes to be dear to men in this World; And ſhall compare herewith, the preſent State of Chriſtendome, *now ſince the offence of the Croſs is ceaſed, and the Faith of Chriſt is become the Profeſſion of Kings and Princes, and (beſides all other either arguments of its truth, or inducements to embrace it) is confirmed by the ſucceſſive Suffrages of ſo many Ages, and the concurrent Votes of ſo great a part of Mankind: He, I ſay, that ſhall take the little pains to make this Compariſon, cannot chooſe but be aſtoniſhed at the contrary face of things, and be ready to ſay with* Linacer, Aut hoc non eſt Evangelium, aut nos non ſumus Evangelici, Either Chriſtian Religion is not what it was, or men are not what they were wont to be.

For beſides the palpable Contradiction of the Lives of the generality of Chriſtians now, to the Rules of their Religion, laid down in the Writings of the New Teſtament, which is ſuch, as would make an indifferent man ſuſpect that they believed thoſe Books to contain abſolute impoſſibilities, or at leaſt, not

the

the things that are neceſſary to ſalvation; ſince ſo few take the Rule of their Lives, or the Meaſures of their Actions thence: Beſides this, I ſay, he that ſhall obſerve how the Primitive Chriſtians for ſeveral Ages after our Saviour are reported to have lived, and how far ſhort the latter Ages fall of thoſe Examples, will be tempted either to pronounce the Hiſtories of thoſe Times meer Romances; or the Men of theſe Times to be any thing, rather than what they call themſelves.

Such a general Declenſion there hath been, that the complaint of Tully, *concerning the Philoſophers of his time, may juſtly be applyed to the Chriſtians of ours, That they made* diſciplinam ſuam, oſtentationem ſcientiæ, non legem vitæ; non obtemperant ſibi ipſis, ſed in eo peccant, cujus profitentur ſcientiam. *That whereas Chriſtian Religion was calculated for no other Meridian, deſigned to no other purpoſe, than the bettering and improving the Tempers and Lives of Men, it is* perverted *rather to an Apology for our Looſneſs, than* applyed *to the Cure of our Diſorders.*

I cannot pleaſe my ſelf with ſo odious a Compariſon as the Caſe in hand would ad-

mit of; nor will I trouble the Reader with long ſtories of the admirable Converſation of thoſe early Chriſtians, which whoſo will take the pains, may find in Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Origen *and others: And he that is willing to decline that trouble, may find nearer hand in the Collections of a judicious and faithful Writer, in his Book called,* Primitive Chriſtianity.

But it may not be unuſeful to remark ſome few particulars.

Of old to be a Chriſtian, was to be all that is holy, juſt and good, to be adorned with all thoſe Virtues that can render a man acceptable to God, or lovely amongſt men. Whereever this Religion came, it was a Principle of Purity in mens Hearts, of Honeſty in their Lives, and of Peace in Kingdoms and Societies. It raiſed mens minds to a Contemplation and Purſuit of another World, and inabled them both to deſpiſe the preſent, and to be a bleſſing to it. It did not teach men to ſpeak great ſwelling words, but to live, to do and to ſuffer admirably; that the very Pagans (their mortal Enemies,) were aſtoniſhed at them; and ſome of them gave them this teſtimony, Hi ſunt qui vivunt ut loquuntur, & loquuntur ut vivunt;

vunt; These are the men that are as good as their word, and live as high and generously as others talk. *The Christian Faith was not then a meer trick of Wit, nor a bone of Contention; but a Principle of sincere Honesty, which guided men into the knowledge of their Duty, and inspired them with courage and resolution to perform it.*

Give me, *saith* Lactantius, a fierce and contentious man, and if he will but apply himself to the Grace and Institutions of the Gospel, he shall become as mild as a Lamb: Give me a Drunkard or a Lascivious person, with this Doctrine I will make him chaste and sober: Let a Covetous man hearken to this Doctrine, and he shall presently dispense his money as charitably, as before he raked it together sordidly: Give me a timorous and cowardly person, this Religion shall presently make him valiant and despise death and danger. *And so he goes on.* *lib. 7. 26. cap. de fuga sap.*

In those dayes Believing was not an excuse for Disobedience, or a commutation for a holy Life; but a foundation of Obedience to all the Laws of God and man.

Then all the Professors of Christianity had

one heart and one lip, and then they built towards Heaven in a good ſenſe; but ſince, diſtraction of Mind, alienation of Affections, and confuſion of Language hath made a Babel *of a Church. There was then but one diviſion of men,* εὐσεβεῖς *and* ἀσεβεῖς *were the only Sects the World was divided by; all good men were of one way, and evil men of another. But now there are almoſt as many Opinions as Men, as many Parties as Opinions, and as many Religions as either.*

Time was, when men ſacrificed their Lives in teſtimony to their Faith, as frankly, as ſince they have done to their Paſſions, Revenge or Ambition. Then was Charity counted as eſſential a part of Religion, as Cenſoriouſneſs is now with too many. Brotherly love and mutual dearneſs was a characteriſtical Note of thoſe then, that now may be as well known by their diſtractions and animoſities. Orat. 1. *St.* Gregory Nazianzen *ſaid of thoſe Times, That if one Chriſtian took notice of the error, ſin or failing of another, it was to bewail it, to heal it, to cover his ſhame, and cure his wound, and prevent a ſcandal to his Profeſſion; but he obſerved, that after-times made triumphs of mens weakneſs and follies; and men learnt to juſtifie their own wickedneſs by the miſcarri-*

ages,

ages of their Brethren; and that he that would prove himself of the highest form of Christians, set himself down in the seat of the scorner.

Nothing was then thought too good or costly for the service of God or Religion: Men would not content themselves to serve God with that which cost them nothing. It was only Julian, *or such another, that envyed the costly Vessels, wherewith Christ was served. Works of Piety and Mercy and Charity cost them as much as Luxury and Contention now a dayes. When the Gentiles in* Tertullian's *time, upbraided the Christians, that they made choice of a Cheap Religion, and renounced the Pagan Sacrifices, because they would not undergo the charge of them; and complained that the Frugality of the Christian Worship caused a decay of Trade for the Eastern Gumms and Spices, that used to be spent in the service of the Gods, and that by this means the Customs of the Emperors were also diminished: To all this he makes this answer:* We Christians spend more in the relief of the poor, than you Gentiles do upon your Gods: And though we use not Gumms and Spices for Incense, yet we as much promote Trade by the vast proportions of those commodities we spend in the

imbalming our dead. And lastly, if it should happen that the Emperors Exchequer should lose any thing, either by the temperance of our Lives, or the nature of our Religion, yet we make it up another way; for we make conscience of paying him his just dues: whereas you cheat and defraud him of more than the proportion of your expences above ours would amount to.

In those early times the Christian Assemblies drained and emptied the Roman *Theatres, and the multitude thronged into the Church, as earnestly as now they crowd out;* Coimus in cœtum ut ad deum quasi manu factâ precationibus ambiamus orantes, *said the forementioned* Tertullian. *The confluence to the publick Worship was in those dayes so great, and the consent of heart and voice so universal, that St.* Jerome *said, The* Hallelujahs *of the Church was like the noise of many Waters, and the* Amen *like Thunder; Heaven and Earth then answered each other in a glorious* Antiphone, *and made up one blessed* Chorus: *There was joy in Heaven, and peace on Earth: The Hymn sung by the Angel at our Saviours Nativity, was verified in those first Ages of his Religion,* Glory to God on High, on Earth peace, and Good-will amongst men.

The

The Holy men of those times that approached our Saviour, had as it were some Rayes of his Divinity shed upon them, and their faces shone like Moses's, *when he came down from the Holy Mount.*

A Christian Church was a Colledge of holy and good men, and the Glory of God filled the place where they assembled; and Fire came down from Heaven too, but not to set the World in combustion, but to exhale and lift up the Odours of pious and devout Prayers.

But since those times Zeal hath decayed, as if it had not been the intrinsick Excellency of Religion but the fires of Pagan Persecution that kindled that heat in the breasts of Christians. And the Church so divided and broken in pieces, as if it was not one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism that united them, but a common enemy. Dry Opinions have been taken for Faith, and Zeal of a Party hath gone for Holiness of Life; Men have been busie in making new Creeds, and have forgotten to practise the old one. And since the Empire hath been divided into East, and West, Churches have been at defiance, and as opposite to each other as those points are. In short, the once famous Greek *Churches*

ches are now over-run with ſo ſqualid a Barbariſm, that little but the Name of Chriſtianity is left amongſt them: And the Roman *Church, whoſe Faith was famous and* ſpoken of through all the world, *is now as infamous for Uſurpation, Superſtition and Cruelty, and ſo deformed with Pagan Rites and mundane Policies, that Chriſtianity is the leaſt part of her.*

Rom. 1. 8.

What ſhall we take to be the reaſon of this general Defection? Was it only Novelty and not its intrinſick Goodneſs and Reaſonableneſs that commended this Religion to the World, that the longer it laſts, the leſs it ſignifies? Or are the Principles of Chriſtianity effete (like the Cauſes of the Gentile Oracles, as Plutarch *diſcourſes) that all the motives of Virtue and Holineſs have now ſo little influence upon mens tempers and lives? Or is it true that was ſaid of old,* Religio peperit divitias, & filia devoravit matrem, *ſince Churches have been endowed, men have eſpouſed only the Fortune, and not the Faith? Or is the true reaſon, that of old, Chriſtianity was deeply rooted in the Hearts of men, and brought forth the fruits of good works in their Lives: whereas now it is only a barren notion in mens Heads, and is productive of nothing but leaves of Opinion and*

and Profeſſion? Then it was the employment of mens hearts in meditation, of their knees in devotion, of their hands in diſtribution and beneficence: now it is become the entertainment of mens ears in hearing novelty, of their tongues and lips in cenſuring and diſputing.

But whatever the cauſes have been, ſuch is the condition of Religion generally in the Greek *and* Latin *Churches; and I doubt if we come nearer home, we ſhall not find things much better.*

This Iſland of Britain *had the glory not only to be the native Countrey of* Conſtantine *the firſt Chriſtian Emperour, but a far Greater, that under* Lucius *it received the Chriſtian Faith firſt of any great Kingdom in the world.* Britannorum loca, Romanis inacceſſa, Chriſto verò ſubdita, *ſaith* Tertullian, *The Croſs made a more effectual as well as a more happy Conqueſt here, than all the* Roman *Powers could do. And thus Northern Climate was not only thus early enlightned with the beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, but had life and warmth proportionably. An evidence whereof we have, in that we find* Britiſh *Biſhops at the Council of* Arles *which was held before the* Nicene: *And at the*

time

time of the Nicene *Council* Britain *was counted one of the Six Dioceſes of the Weſtern Empire. And for the Zeal of the* Britiſh *Chriſtians, the Martyrdom of St.* Albane, Amphilochius *and others are great and glorious inſtances.*

But to deſcend to lower times. The Inhabitants of this Iſland have not been more famous for Martial Proweſs againſt their enemies, hoſpitality to ſtrangers, and good nature towards all mankind, (which three things have been, and, I hope, are ſtill their peculiar glories,) than for ſincere piety and devotion. Polydore Virgil *an* Italian, *and* Eraſmus *a* Dutchman, *both of the* Roman *Communion, and competent Witneſſes, do affirm, That there was more true Devotion and ſincerity of Religion in this Church and Kingdom of* England, *than in any one place of the world beſides. What was ſaid of* Sparta, *that* ibi ſenes ſunt maximè ſenes, *might be applyed to this purpoſe, that here Chriſtians were ſo the moſt heartily and truly of any people in the world. The Univerſal Paſtor (as he would be called) I mean the Biſhop of* Rome, *obſerved the Sheep of* England *to bear ſuch good Fleeces, and ſo patiently to ſubmit to the Shearer, that he kept a watchful eye over this Flock, and his vi-*

gilancy

gilancy was rewarded with the Golden Fleece. He and his Emiſſaries found ſuch large hearts and devout minds here, that we are inabled to underſtand the reaſon of their great concern for our going aſtray ſince, and their earneſt and unwearied endeavours to reduce us back again to that fold. Yet what by being oftner ſhorn than fed, (and then not with the beſt Paſtures neither,) what by the ill examples of others, (but eſpecially of their Guides,) and what by length of time; corruption overſpread this Church too: But then, as it happens in bodies of a ſtrong and vivacious Conſtitution, when they chance by ill Diet or other accident, to be ſtuft with Crudities and bad humours, they Critically evacuate them by meer ſtrength of Nature: So this Church gave certain proof that it had ſana principia, *and a true ſenſe of the reality of Chriſtianity, that one of the firſt in* Chriſtendom *it returned to it ſelf and a juſt temperament by a Reformation.*

And the Reformation of this Church; which the Romaniſts, for their own ends, ſo much deteſt, and ſome others unreaſonably ſlight, was as much the Emulation of other Nations, as Glorious in it ſelf. For,

1. *It*

1. *It was the most orderly and best becoming Christianity; it was not brought in with Tumult and Sedition, as most Changes are, but by Laws and the Supream Magistrate. There was no noise of Axes and Hammers in this Building, but the several parts of this Fabrick fell in together with a kind of Harmony, as the Jews say of the Temple of* Salomon.

2. *It was the most moderate and temperate, as being the result of Deliberation and Reason, not of blind Passion or an humour of Innovation. Our Reformers did not purge out the good, because formerly it had been abused (as the humour of some men is to do) but vindicated what was useful, from the abuse: They neither countenanced what was evil by the good was to be found, nor rejected the good for the casual adherence of evil. They did not abolish a venerable Order or Office in the Church for the ill manners of some that had born it; but took care to put better men in the rooms of such. They were not of opinion, that the Church could not arrive at primitive purity, unless it was reduced to primitive poverty; nor because they found some Ceremonies then used that were superstitious and dangerous, and thought*

too

too many were burdenſome, therefore concluded all decency in the ſervice of God was Popiſh. And in ſhort, they did not depart farther from the Church *of* Rome *by Reformation, than ſhe had departed from the Truth and her ſelf by degeneracy and corruption. By all which they demonſtrated, that the change they made, was not for the ſake of humour and faction, but neceſſity and publick good.*

The Church of Rome *reproaches us with the ſiniſter ends of the Prince and ſeveral of thoſe that ſate at the helm of this great affair: But who knows not, that it is the uſual method of Almighty God to bring about his own deſigns, and accompliſh the greateſt benefits to Mankind, by making the ſiniſter intentions of men co-operate towards them? He made uſe of the unnatural cruelty of* Joſeph's *brethren towards him, to the preſervation of the whole family of* Jacob, *ſending* Joſeph *into* Ægypt *as an Harbinger and Nurſe to provide for them in a famine. And in reſpect hereof* Joſeph *tells them*, it was not they, but God ſent him thither. *The Cruelty of* Pharaoh, *who ſought by ſeverities to break and wear out the* Iſraelites, *harden'd them and prepared them for all the difficulties they were afterwards to encounter. The obſtinacy and incredulity of the Jews,*

proved

proved to be the riches of the Gentiles. *The*
Acts 8. 4. *perſecution of the Apoſtles at* Jeruſalem *made way for the ſpreading of the Goſpel into all other Countreys. Inſtances of this kind are innumerable; or if they were not, yet were it very unſafe for thoſe of the Church of* Rome *to make this objection, leſt they provoke us to ſay what cannot be either denyed or juſtified, That the barbarous Tyrant and Uſurper* Phocas *brought in the Univerſal Paſtorſhip of the Biſhop of* Rome, *and that the moſt bloody and rapacious Princes have ordinarily been the great Patrons and Indowers of their Church; thinking, it ſeems, to hallow their own Villanies, and legitimate their unjuſt acquiſitions, by dividing the ſpoil with the Biſhop and Church of* Rome.

3. *The* Engliſh *Reformation was the moſt compleat and perfect in its kind, as retaining the moſt antient Doctrine and ſoundeſt Confeſſion of Faith, founded upon the holy Scriptures, and agreeable to the firſt General Councils, the moſt Primitive Church-Government, and a Liturgy the beſt accommodate to reconcile and unite mens Devotions: Such a Liturgy, as Mr.* Fox *the Author of the Martyrologie is not afraid to ſay was indited by the Holy Ghoſt; but certainly had a great*

teſtimony

teſtimony in the unſpeakable joy and contentment holy men took in it in King Edward *the Sixths dayes, their zeal for the maintenance of it, longing for the reſtitution of it, and ſealing it with their blood in Queen* Maries *dayes, and the univerſal triumphs and acclamations at the reſtoring of it in Queen* Elizabeths *Reign.*

And admirable it is to conſider how happy this Church and Nation then was; in what Glory and Majeſty the Prince reigned, in what Peace and Concord the Subjects lived; but eſpecially it is remarkable, how devout and pious an Age that was, as is ſcarce perhaps to be parallel'd ſince the time that Chriſtianity flouriſht under Conſtantine *the Great. What reverence was then yielded to the Miniſters of Religion? What devotion to the publick Worſhip? How general an acquieſcence of hearts and minds in it?*

Which the greater it was, the more juſt is our wonder, and the more reaſonable our inquiry, what ſhould be the Cauſe that in the ſame Church, and amongſt devout and honeſt-minded Engliſhmen, ſuch a zeal ſhould terminate in ſo cold an indifferency, as may now be obſerved; or rather that ſuch

a blessed harmony should degenerate into so much discord, as is now too discernable amongst us.

We read Ezra 3. that when the second Temple at Jerusalem was building, the young men rejoyced at the reviving glory of their Nation and Religion, but the old men that had beheld the far greater splendour and more stately Majesty of the former Temple built by Salomon, they wept, as contemplating how far this came short of that: so that it was hard to say, whether the shouts of the young men or the lamentations of the elder were the more loud. And truly when we consider in how low a condition the Church of England was some few years since, till it had a happy Resurrection with the return of our Gracious Soveraign, will see cause to rejoyce and thank God that we are in no worse condition than we are; But he that understands and considers what was the felicity of the first Age of our Reformation, and compares it with the present condition of our affairs, will have just cause to lament the difference.

For in those dayes so venerable was the Society of the Church, that to be cast out of it

it by Excommunication was as dreadful as to be thunder-ſmitten; that Sentence was like Proſcription amongſt the Romans, *which they counted a Civil death, and dreaded as much as a Natural. But now it is become a matter of Ambition with ſome, and a piece of Glory; And to be caſt out of the Church, is as good as Letters teſtimonial or recommendatory to other Aſſemblies.*

There were few or none then that did not conſtantly frequent the Church; now the Church is become the Conventicle in many places, and the Conventicle the Church, in reſpect of the fulneſs and frequency of the one and the unfrequentedneſs and deſtitution of the other.

Ariſtonicus *came to a certain City in* Greece *where he obſerved many Temples, but few Men that would hear him. He therefore inſtead of the uſual phraſe* ἀκούετε λαοί, *cryes out,* ἀκούετε νᾶοι, *Hear O ye Stone-walls, leſs hard than the hearts of men. The Application is too eaſie in our caſe.*

In that time we ſpeak of, the Liturgy and publick Prayers were counted a princi-

pal part of Gods Worſhip ; now they are not only nothing without a Sermon, but in danger to deſecrate the Sermon too by their conjunction. The Bible is ſcarce Canonical, if it have the Prayers bound up in the ſame Cover ; and ſo extreamly offenſive are they grown to ſome, that they will rather totally neglect the publick Worſhip of God, and never receive the Communion whileſt they live, than have to do with the Common Prayers.

Heretofore there were but few things ſcrupled in the eſtabliſht Religion, and thoſe were very few that made uſe of any ſuch pretence or ſcruple ; but now it is become the great point of Sanctity to ſcruple every thing. There was one indeed, and he a great man, that ſaid, there were tolerabiles ineptiæ *in our Liturgy ; and the moſt favourable return he met with, was, that he had his* tolerabiles moroſitates. *Now the title of* ineptiæ *is counted too mild an expreſſion ; whatever ſuits not the preſent humour, is either Jewiſh, Popiſh or Superſtitious.*

Mr. Calv.

This Change is ſadly lamentable, that good Laws ſhould be thus trampled upon, the beſt

beſt Church in the world thus deſpiſed, and the beſt minded People thus abuſed.

Now my buſineſs is therefore in the firſt place, to enquire from what Cauſes this hath come to paſs.

PART I.

An Enquiry into the Cauſes and Origin of the Separation from and Contempt of the Engliſh *Reformed Church.*

CHAP. I.

Wherein are repreſented ſeveral things that are pretended, but are not the true Cauſes *of our diſtractions and diſſatisfactions*; viz. 1. *Corruption in Doctrine*; 2. *The too near approach of this Church to the* Roman; 3. *The Scandalouſneſs of the Clergy: All which are diſproved.*

WE have a Proverbial ſaying amongſt us, that *Every one that is forty years old, is either a Fool or a Phyſician:* But without a Proverb to juſtifie the undertaking, there are but few that (at

what age ſoever) do not think themſelves at years of diſcretion enough, to paſs a judgement upon, and preſcribe to the Body Politick, whether Church or State. Though it uſually happens, that ſuch Empiricks, either to ſhew their wit (ſuſpecting diſtempers where there are none) make them; or whileſt they raſhly adventure *quieta movere*, and like *Engliſhmen* will be alwayes mending, they make work for better skill than their own; or laſtly, if they diſcover ſome ſmall matter amiſs, miſtaking the cauſe of it, not only loſe their time and labour (which would be eaſily pardonable) but exhauſt the ſpirits of the Patient with improper medicines, and purge out the good and uſeful juices as noxious humours, and ſo the Phyſician becomes far the greater diſeaſe of the two.

That our Church is of a ſound and healthful conſtitution, and might have continued ſo, had it not met with this fortune, I think I have ſufficiently, though briefly manifeſted in the foregoing Introduction: But ſome men either loving to be alwayes reforming, or having firſt ſeparated from it, that they may either commend their own skill, or juſtifie their own fact, muſt accuſe the Church.

We

We read of *Brutus*, that having killed *Cæſar*, he was alwayes after inveighing againſt him as a Tyrant, *Ità enim facto ejus expediebat*, ſaith the Hiſtorian, It was expedient he ſhould call *Cæſar* Tyrant, for otherwiſe himſelf muſt be a notorious Traytor. So theſe men, though the greateſt diſorders of the Church be but what themſelves have made, muſt find faults, that they may not ſeem to have raiſed all the duſt, and withdrawn themſelves and others from it without cauſe.

1. And in the firſt place the Doctrine of this Church is blamed; though thanks be to God, there are but few that are of ſo little diſcretion as to bring in this charge, and thoſe that are, will never be able to prove it.

The main (if not the only) thing excepted againſt in this kind, is, that the thirty nine Articles are not ſo punctual in defining the five points debated at the Synod of *Dort* as they could wiſh. But this though it neither needs nor deſerves an anſwer, yet I ſhall reply theſe two things to it.

Firſt, That it is not ſo with the Doctrine of Chriſtianity as with common Arts and Sci-

Sciences, which depend upon humane wit and invention, and consequently are capable of daily improvements: For the mind of man having not an intuitive knowledge, but proceeding by way of discourse, discovers one thing by another, and infers things from one another; so that there is not a *Nè plus ultrà* in those things, but daily new discoveries, *& dies diem docet.* Whereto accords the saying of wise men, *Antiquitas sæculi, est juventus mundi*; That which we call the old World, is but indeed the infancy of knowledge, and the latter Times must needs have as much the advantage of truth as they have of deliberation and experiment.

But it is quite otherwise with Christianity, for that depending solely upon Divine Revelation, can admit of no new discoveries; time may obscure it, and the busie wit of man may perplex and confound it with its inventions, but can never discover any thing new, or bring to light any truth that was not so from the beginning. For if we admit of new Revelations, we lose the old and our Religion together, we accuse our Saviour and his Apostles as if they had not sufficiently revealed Gods mind to the world, and we incurr St. *Paul*'s *Anathema* which

which he denounces against him (whosoever it shall be, nay, if an Angel from Heaven) that shall preach any other doctrine than what had been received. And St. *Jude* hath told us the Faith was *once*, that is either at once, or once for all, delivered to or by the Saints. But if we shall pretend a private Spirit or Revelation to discover and interpret what was before delivered, we do as bad; we suppose Christ and his Apostles not to be able to deliver the mind of God, and we open a Gap for all Impostures and delusions perpetually to infest and corrupt Christian Doctrine.

The consequence of these premises is, that (contrary to what I affirmed before of other Sciences) the elder any Doctrine of Christianity can be proved to be, it must needs be the truer, and accordingly deserve the greater veneration from us, as coming nearer the fountain of Evangelical Truth, Divine Revelation: and that he that talks of more clear Light of the latter times, and clearer discoveries in Religion, talks as foolishly as he that should affirm he could discern things better at a miles distance, than the man that hath as good eyes as himself, and yet stood close by the object.

This

This being ſo, it muſt needs be the excellency and great commendation of this Church, that her Articles of Doctrine agree better with the firſt Times of Chriſtianity than the laſt Age; and is an irrefragable Argument that ſhe derived it not from any Lake or lower ſtreams troubled and mudded with mens paſſions and diſputes, but from the Fountain of the holy Scripture, and from thoſe who certainly had beſt advantage of underſtanding it in its own ſimplicity, the Primitive Church. That no one Father or Writer of the Church, whether Greek or Latin, before St. *Auſtin's* time agreed in Doctrine with the determination of the Synod of *Dort* is ſo notoriouſly plain that it needs no proof, nor can be denyed. And if he (I mean St. *Auſtin*) agrees therewith, yet it is certain that in ſo doing he diſagrees as much with himſelf as he doth with us of the Church of *England*. And what if St. *Auſtin*, a devout good man, (but whoſe Piety was far more commendable than his Reaſon,) being hard put to it by the *Manichees* on one hand, and the *Pelagians* on the other, was not able to extricate himſelf, who can help it? Shall his Opinion, and that which he was rather forced into by diſputation than made choice of, but eſpecially ſhall the Determination

of

of a few Divines at *Dort* vye with the conſtant Doctrine of the Primitive Church, or make that an imputation upon our Church, which is really amongſt its Glories? Muſt a novel *Dutch Synod* preſcribe Doctrine to the Church of *England*, and outweigh all Antiquity? Shall thoſe that knew not how God could be juſt, unleſs he was cruel, nor great, unleſs he decreed to damn the greateſt part of Mankind; that could not tell how man ſhould be kept humble, unleſs they made him not a man but a ſtock or ſtone: Shall, I ſay, ſuch Men and ſuch Opinions confront the Antient Catholick Apoſtolick Faith, held forth in the Church of *England?*

Secondly, The Articles of the Doctrine of this Church do with ſuch admirable prudence and warineſs handle theſe points we are now ſpeaking of, as if particular reſpect was had to theſe men, and care taken that they might *abundare ſuo ſenſu*, enjoy their own Judgements, and yet without check ſubſcribe to theſe Articles. And accordingly it is well known, that not many years ſince, when the *Dort* Opinions were very predominant amongſt many Divines of this Church, they uſed (it may be) a little more ſcholaſtick ſubtilty to reconcile their own Opinions with theſe Articles, but never condemned

demned the latter for the ſake of the former.

And at this day divers good men are in the ſervice of this Church that are in their private Judgements of the *Dort* perſwaſion, and yet never thought their ſubſcription to theſe Articles did any violence to their Conſciences or Judgements: therefore this can be no cauſe of our Troubles, nor ground of Separation from the Church.

A ſecond pretence againſt this Church is, that it is not ſufficiently purged from the droſs of Popiſh Superſtitions, that it comes too near the Church of *Rome*, and ſo the Communion of it is dangerous.

Popery is an odious Name in this Nation, and God be thanked that it is ſo, for it deſerves no leſs: But as *Conſtantine* when he condemned the *Arrians* and decreed their Books ſhould be burnt, appointed that they ſhould be called *Porphyrians*, a Name ſufficiently deteſted by the generality of Chriſtians: So thoſe men that have a mind to reproach the Church, know no more effectual way of affixing an Ignominy upon it, than by laying the imputation of Popery to it. And indeed if the Charge were as true as it is falſe, or if it were as probable as it is malicious,

cious, it would not only ſerve to exaſperate the Vulgar againſt the Church, but to juſtifie their Seceſſion from it. But it is hard to ſay whether the unreaſonableneſs or the uncharitableneſs be greater in this ſuggeſtion. For,

1. It is certain there hath been little or no alteration made in either the Doctrine, Diſcipline or Liturgy ſince the firſt Reformation; and therefore if either of them incline too much that way, they did ſo from the beginning. Now that which I inquire into, is, what ſhould be the cauſes of the late revolt and ſeparation from this Church, or what ſhould make that diſcernable change in mens affections towards it, from what was in the former Age? And he that tells me it was Popiſhly conſtituted at firſt, gives indeed a reaſon (if it was true) why this Reformation ſhould not have been entertained at firſt, but doth not aſſign a cauſe why thoſe ſhould depart from it now, that had imbraced it with ſo much zeal formerly. He therefore that would ſpeak home to this caſe, muſt ſhew that this Church hath *loſt its firſt love*, and hath warped towards the old corruptions from which it was once purged. But this is ſo far from being poſſible to be ſhewn, that it is certain on the contrary, that all the change that hath been made of late years,

hath

hath been meerly in complyance with and condeſcenſion to thoſe that object this againſt it; and a man would reaſonably expect, they would eaſily pardon ſuch Innovations.

But in truth the main quarrel is, that we are not alwayes reforming, but keep to the old Matron-like Dreſs, the Queen *Elizabeth* faſhion. If the Governours of the Church would comply with the curioſity of this wanton Age, our Religion would quickly have the fortune of *Apelles*'s picture according to the known ſtory. He to deride the conceited folly of the Age, expoſes to publick view a Maſter-piece of his work: And as it uſually happens, that every body pretends to skill in reforming (by the incouragement of the Proverb that ſaith, *facile eſt inventis addere*) ſcarcely any perſon that paſt by, but ſpent their verdict upon the picture; All commend it in the general, yet to give ſome ſpecial inſtance of their skill, every one finds ſome fault or other: One would have had more Shadow, another leſs; one commends the Eye, but blames a Lip, *&c.* The ſubtil Artiſt obſerves all, and ſtill as any paſſenger had ſhot his bolt, alters the picture accordingly. The reſult was, that at laſt by ſo many Reformations it became ſo deformed and monſtrous a piece, that not only

only wiſer men, but theſe vulgar Reformers themſelves wondered at it, and could now diſcern nothing worthy ſo famed an Artiſt. He on the other hand, to right himſelf, produces another Piece of the ſame Beauty and Art, which he had hitherto kept up by him, and had eſcaped their cenſure, and upbraids them thus, *Hanc ego feci, iſtam populus*, This latter is my work, the other is a monſter of your own making.

This is our caſe; Chriſtian Religion was by holy and wiſe men our Reformers, deveſted of thoſe gaudy and meretricious accoutrements the *Romaniſts* had dreſt her up in, and habited according to primitive ſimplicity; but this would not pleaſe every body, every Sect and Party would have ſomething or other added or altered according to their ſeveral phancies and Hypotheſes, which if it ſhould be allowed (the opinions of men are ſo contrary one to another as well as to truth) the true lineaments of Chriſtianity would quite be loſt. Upon this conſideration hath not this Church been very fond of alterations.

But to all this it is likely it will be replyed, That now we have more light and diſcover blemiſhes and deformities, which (though

they were before, yet) we could not diſcern when our ſelves came out of the dark Den of Popery. At firſt, like the man under cure of his blindneſs, *Mark* 8. 24. we ſaw men as trees walking, we diſcovered only ſome more palpable errors, but now we diſcern though leſſer yet not tolerable deformities.

2. To this therefore I anſwer in the ſecond place, That it is certain all is not to be eſteemed Popery, that is held or practiſed by the Church of *Rome*, and it cannot be our duty (as I have ſaid before) to depart further from her than ſhe hath departed from the truth: for then it would be our duty to forſake Chriſtianity it ſelf in deteſtation of Popery. To reform is not ſurely to caſt away every thing that was in uſe before, unleſs Barbariſm be the only through Reformation.

The Hiſtorian obſerves of thoſe that ſpoil Provinces and ranſack Kingdoms *ubi ſolitudinem fecere pacem appellant*, when they had converted a flouriſhing Countrey into a deſolate wilderneſs, they called this a profound peace. But ſure to reform is not to deſtroy and lay waſte, but to amend. Unleſs therefore it can be proved againſt the Church of *England* that ſhe holds or practiſes any thing falſe or ſinful, it will little avail them that ob-

object againſt her, and as little be any blemiſh to her conſtitution, that in ſome things ſhe concurs with the *Roman*. Nor is it reaſonable to ſay, ſuch a thing is received from the Church of *Rome*, meerly becauſe there it is to be found, unleſs it be to be found no where elſe: for though it be true that many things are the ſame in both Churches, (in as much as it is impoſſible they ſhould be Churches of Chriſt at all elſe,) yet it is as true that thoſe things wherein they agree are ſuch (and no other) as were received generally by all Chriſtian Churches, and by the *Roman* before it lay under any ill character. But that this Church doth not ſo ſyncretize with that of *Rome*, as to make its Communion unſafe or ſinful, I ſuppoſe the following Conſiderations will give ſufficient ſecurity to an unprejudiced mind. In the mean time let me intreat him that hath entertained any ſuſpicions of that kind againſt her, to give an ingenuous Anſwer of theſe two or three Queries.

1. If there be ſuch a dangerous affinity betwixt the Church of *England* and the *Romiſh*, how came it to paſs that the bleſſed inſtruments of our Reformation, ſuch as A. Biſhop *Cranmer*, *Ridley*, *Latimer* and others, laid down their lives in teſtimony to this

againſt that? For if thoſe of the Church of *Rome* could have been ſo barbarous as cruelly to murder thoſe excellent perſons for ſome ſlight Innovations, or for differing from them in Circumſtantials; yet certainly ſuch wiſe and good men would not have been ſo prodigal of their own blood, nor weary of their lives as to caſt them away upon Trifles. It is probable at leaſt therefore that thoſe of the Church of *Rome* thought the *Engliſh* Reformation to be eſſentially different from them; and it is more than probable that thoſe holy men aforeſaid thought ſo, and did not offer to God the ſacrifice of fools.

2. Or how comes it to paſs that all thoſe of the *Roman* Communion withdraw themſelves from ours, and are commanded ſo to do by the Head of their Church under peril of damnation? And on the other ſide the true Proteſtants of the Church of *England*, think it their duty to abſent themſelves from the *Roman* Worſhip, leſt they ſhould defile their Conſciences with their Superſtitions? I ſay how comes this diſtance and apprehenſion of ſin and danger reciprocally, if the differences between them be inconſiderable?

3. Whence comes it to paſs, that the *Bigots* of the *Romiſh* Church have more ſpite againſt

againſt our Church, than againſt any Sect or Party whatſoever? but that they take us not only for Enemies, but the moſt mortal and formidable of all thoſe they have to do with.

Or Laſtly, if both the Church and Churchmen of *England* are not far enough removed from any participation with that of *Rome*, how comes it to paſs that they of all men moſt zealouſly and conſtantly upon all occaſions ſtand in the gap and oppoſe the return of Popery into *England*, when other men either ſlight the danger, or are ſo fond of their own private ſentiments, as apparently to run the hazard of this for the ſake of them? Any reaſonable man would think thoſe men have not really ſuch an abhorrence of Popery as they pretend, and that there might eaſily be found terms of accommodation between them, when he ſhall obſerve them more fond of every petty Opinion, than concern'd for the publick Security againſt that common Enemy; And that they will rather venture the danger of that breaking in upon them, than forgo the leaſt fancy or opinion; nay, will be inſtrumental in procuring a Toleration and ſuſpenſion of the publick Laws for that, which they are ſo jealous others ſhould have any kindneſs for. And for proof of this, I

call to witneſs the tranſactions of the laſt year, when thoſe very men that would be thought the *Atlas*'s and only ſupporters of Proteſtant Religion, and would give out as if their Zeal was the only Bulwark againſt Popery, had by their ſeparation from, and enmity to this Church, weakned the common intereſt, and by their reſtleſs importunities and unlimited deſires of liberty, in a manner extorted a ſuſpenſion of the Laws touching Religion. Had not His Majeſty and His Parliament timely foreſeen the conſequence, and the whole Nation been awakned into an apprehenſion of the danger by the ſerious and conſtant admonitions of the Epiſcopal Clergy, Popery might have come in like a Landflood upon us, notwithſtanding thoſe quickſighted Watchmen that can ſpy Popery ſo far off. I ſay had not the *Church-men* eſpecially beſtirred themſelves, and ſhewed both a better courage and zeal againſt Popery, and alſo a better skill in that warfare than their Accuſers, the ſo much dreaded Enemy had ere this time been in fair hopes of attaining his deſires.

This was a paſſage of ſo much glory to the true Church-men, and ſo great and illuſtrious an inſtance of their integrity, that I am in hope whileſt it ſhall remain in memory,

Malice

Malice it ſelf will be aſhamed to lay any imputation of inclining to Popery either upon the Church or Church-men of *England*.

I ſhall not need to add to all this, That there are as underſtanding men in Religion, perſons of as holy Lives, and of as comfortable Conſciences, of this Churches Education, as are any where to be found in the world beſides. Which three things together fully acquit any Church of participation with Popery. For that degeneracy of Chriſtianity is for nothing more truly hateful, nor by nothing more diſcoverable than by its blind devotion, principles of immorality, and the bad ſecurity it gives to the Conſciences of men; which who ſo acquits any Church of, (as every conſiderate man muſt needs do this Church) he ſhall after that, very unreaſonably leave any ill character upon her, at leaſt of that nature we now are ſpeaking of.

3. But there is a terrible Charge yet to come, and that is againſt the Sufficiency, but eſpecially the Sanctity of the Clergy and Miniſtry of the Church of *England*; as if they, like the Sons of *Eli*, 1 Sam. 2. 15. *made men to abhor the offerings of the Lord*. And this is made the pretence of reſorting to Conventicles, and forſaking the Church.

Now if this was as true as it is horribly falſe, it might be an Objection perhaps fit for a *Papiſt* to make, who is taught that the efficacy of all Divine Offices depends upon the intention and condition of him that adminiſters; But no *Proteſtant* without contradicting his own principles can make uſe of it to juſtifie his receſſion from the Church: For if the efficacy of all Divine Ordinances depend upon the Divine Inſtitution and the concurrence of Gods Grace with my uſe of them, what can it prejudice me, that he that adminiſters is an evil or unlearned man, ſo long as I prepare my ſelf to receive benefit immediately from God in the uſe of the means appointed by him? This therefore may ſerve for a malicious ſtone to caſt at us from whom they are departed; but no argument in the cauſe, nor excuſe for themſelves.

Yet I confeſs nevertheleſs, this way of arguing (for we muſt be forced to call hard words by that name) is of great prevalence with injudicious perſons, and able to prejudice them againſt the beſt Conſtitutions in the world. For they not underſtanding the reaſon of things, give reception and entertainment to any propoſition in proportion to the

the opinion or reverence they have for the perſon that recommends it. It is a known ſtory, how well the *Spartans* were aware of this; and therefore if in their Council, a man of a bad life had propounded excellent counſel, they would not ſuffer him, but ſubborn ſome other perſon of great ſanctity to be the Author of it: Amongſt other reaſons, leſt the ill opinion that was generally conceived of the perſon, ſhould derogate from the weight and value of the counſel and advice.

Therefore the more extreamly to blame are thoſe that acknowledging the truth and excellency of the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, can yet find in their hearts to undermine the ſucceſs of it by ſowing ſuſpicions and in raiſing ſcandals againſt them, that are to propagate it.

It will be to the immortal glory of the Great *Conſtantine*, that when at the *Nicene* Council the Biſhops and Clergy had exhibited to him a great bundle of Libels one againſt another, he burnt them all together before their faces, as thinking them fitter for the *fire* than the *light*. And proteſted he had ſo great a zeal for the reputation of Church-men, and ſuch a ſenſe of the concern

cern and conſequence of their good ſame and reputation, that if he ſhould ſee one of them in the moſt ſcandalous commiſſion, he would cover ſuch a mans ſhame with his own Purple.

But as I doubt in theſe dayes there is little of the Spirit and Charity of *Conſtantine*, ſo thanks be to God, there is little need of it in this caſe; for I doubt not to convince this ſuggeſtion againſt the *Church-men* of as much falſhood, as the former againſt the *Church* of frivolouſneſs. For though there want not thoſe in theſe dayes that are ſo quick-ſighted as to diſcover ſpots in the Sun it ſelf: Though I ſay, there be both thoſe that have great skill in all the methods of uncharitableneſs, ſuch as can inſinuate little whiſpers and jealouſies firſt, and then foment and hatch them up to a ſtory, and then aggravate the fact, and laſtly make the folly of ſome one man, be the ſcandal of the whole Order; And alſo thoſe Atheiſtical perſons whoſe intereſt it is (in order to the extenuating their own villanies,) as much as may be to render the perſons of thoſe that reprove them as ridiculous as they can, and to that purpoſe are become great proficients of late in a ſcurrilous kind of drollery, whereby they can ſublimate their own vices and debaucheries

baucheries into a kind of vapour, a meer frolick and Gentile humour, and on the other ſide aggravate the meer humane infirmities of graver men into great deformities: yet all their combined wit and malice will never be able to affix any ſcandal upon the Body of the preſent *Engliſh* Clergy.

1. For their Learning and Ability: If the Preaching of the preſent Age be not better than that of former, I would fain know the reaſon why the Homilies are in no greater reputation, and ſhould expect to ſee the people deſire their Paſtors to read them in the Congregation, and ſave the labour of their own compoſitions.

If the Sermons of foreign Divines be better than thoſe of the *Engliſh*, what is then the reaſon that all Proteſtants abroad admire the *Engliſh* way of Preaching, inſomuch that ſome foreign Congregations (as I am credibly informed) defray the charges of the travails of their Paſtor into *England*, as well as diſpenſe with their abſence, that they may return to them inſtructed in the method of *Engliſh* Preaching.

Whether the Preaching in the Church of *Rome* be to be preferred before ours, he that hath

hath not a mind to travail into thoſe parts, may yet indifferently well reſolve himſelf, if he take but the pains to read a Book written by *Eraſmus* of the Art of Preaching: which whoſoever hath done or ſhall do, I verily perſwade my ſelf, he ſhall quickly be able to reckon up more follies and ridiculous paſſages, than all thoſe gathered together by the Author of the *Inquiry into the Cauſes of the Contempt of the Clergy*.

Laſtly, He that ſhall take the pains or have the curioſity to compare the Preachings generally in our *Churches* with thoſe ordinarily in the *Conventicles*, will either find them very unequally matcht, or elſe if he hath any reaſon at all, he hath reaſon to ſuſpect himſelf intolerably prejudicate. For on the one ſide, he ſhall find ſound Theology, ſtrength of Argument, gravity of Expreſſion and diſtinctneſs of Method; on the other ſide nothing more frequent than puerile and flat, oft-times rude, and ſometimes blaſphemous expreſſions, Similitudes inſtead of Arguments, and either apiſh Geſtures, or tragical Vociferations inſtead of Eloquence.

Beſides, a wiſe man may in great meaſure take an eſtimate of the wiſdom and abilities of a Preacher or Writer by the very ſubject he

he chooses to discourse on, and not only by the manner of handling it. And he that shall impartially apply himself to this little trouble, may easily observe the Sermons and Tractates of the Non-conformists generally, to be either about *Predestination*, which (besides the danger of it amongst the people for mistakes) nothing but unskilfulness could make any man confident enough to undertake the unfolding of; or about *Union with God and Christ*, which themselves confess to be unintelligible, and they help to make it so; or the *sweetness*, *beauty* and *loveliness* of Christ's *Person*, which is seldome handled with any better effect, than the stirring up some sensual passion or other in the fond Auditors, as I have seen verified by experience.

God forbid that I should charge all the Non-conformists with such indecencies as these; but it is manifest it is such kind of discourses as I have intimated, that are the most taking and ravishing amongst them.

But then on the other side, you shall hear Discourses of the *Nature* and *Attributes* of God, and the *reason of Religion* deduced thence; of the *Divine Providence*, and Arguments of *Contentment*, *Reverence* and *Submission*

miſſion inferred therefrom; of the *Eternal reaſons of Good and Evil*, and *indiſpenſable obligations to Virtue*, as the conſequence of that principle laid upon the Conſciences of men; of the *nature of Faith*, *the neceſſity of Holineſs*, *of Charity*, *of Obedience to Governours*: all which are good and profitable, and of great weight and importance.

If we now compare the *writings* of both parties, the difference will yet be more legible. Although it hath been obſerved of old by a Wiſe and Great man, That generally the ableſt of men have not been moſt given to writing of Books, as being loth to make themſelves Themes for fools to comment upon; but a middle ſort of men are moſt diſpoſed, and uſually have beſt ſucceſs that way, whoſe Genius is more adequate to vulgar capacities: yet let any man of competent judgement lay paſſion and prejudice aſide, and ſay, if the Writings of the Divines of this Church, both in the Controverſies of Religion and moſt other parts of Learning, have not matcht any other Profeſſion, any other Church, but extreamly overmatcht their Opponents? It were eaſie to name Men and Writings, but I conceive it needleſs in ſo clear a caſe.

2. But

2. But then for the lives of Church-men; Though I will not render evil for evil, nor retaliate the reproaches cast upon the Sons of the Church, by ripping up the miscarriages of the other perswasions: For (besides that I have not so learned Christ,) I have observed so much of the world, that such uncharitable recriminations have not only made an Apology for the Atheism and Profaneness of the Age, but afford a pleasant spectacle to all evil men, to behold Divines coming upon the Stage like Gladiators, and wounding and murdering one anothers reputation. To which add, that I verily hope the Lives, of the *generality* at least, of the Clergy of *England* are so unblameable and commendable in themselves, that they need not the foil of other mens deformities to set them off or recommend them. Yet I will say these two two things further in the case.

1. If a man be a male-content with the Government, and forsaking the Church resort to private Assemblies, or if being a Clergy-man and continuing in the Church, he shall debauch his Office and undermine the Church which he should uphold; such a man may then debauch his Life too, and yet have a very charitable construction amongst the

the generality of diſſenters. And on the other ſide, if a man be of ſingular ſanctity and the moſt holy converſation, but withal zealous of the intereſt of the Church and his own duty in it, this man ſhall have worſe quarter and be more maligned by the fiery Zealots of other parties, than one that is both of a more looſe life and meaner abilities. Whence it plainly appears, that the bad lives of Clergy-men (if it were true) is but a pretext, not the true cauſe of quarrel with the Church.

2. If impertinent and phantaſtical talking of Religion be Religion, if endleſs ſcrupuloſity and ſtraining at Gnats, if cenſoriouſneſs and raſh judging our Betters and Superiours, if melancholy ſighing and complaining be true Chriſtianity, if going from Sermon to Sermon, without allowing our ſelves time to meditate on what we hear, or leiſure to inſtruct our Families; if theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are the main points of true Godlineſs, then I muſt confeſs, the Sons of the Church of *England* are not generally the moſt holy men, and the Non-conformiſts are. But if a reverent ſenſe of God, and Conſcience of keeping all his expreſs Laws, if Juſtice, Mercy, Contentment, Humility, Patience, Peaceableneſs

neſs and Obedience to Governours, be the principal ingredients of a good life; as doubtleſs they are, if we take our meaſures either from our Saviour, the Apoſtles or Prophets: Then I do not deſpair but the Church-men may be good Chriſtians, and of far more holy lives than their accuſers, notwithſtanding all the contempt caſt upon them. For upon this Iſſue I dare challenge Malice it ſelf to be able to faſten any brand of bad life upon the generality or body of the Clergy.

I know this Age is not without ſome of the brood of *Cham*, who will take the impudence to uncover their Fathers nakedneſs, and expoſe thoſe deformities, which they ought, not only out of charity or reverence, but wiſdom alſo to conceal. And it is not to be expected that ſuch a body of men, made of the ſame fleſh and blood, and ſolicited with the ſame temptations with other men, ſhould be altogether without ſpot or blemiſh: yet I do really believe, thoſe are extream few of that number that juſtly deſerve any ſcandalous character, and alſo very inconſiderable in reſpect of the whole. And he that ſhall for the miſcarriages of a few, reflect diſhonour upon the Clergy in general, ſhall do as unrighteouſ-

ly, as he that ſhall take a downright honeſt man, and omitting his many and great vertues and innumerable good actions, only rake up and repreſent in an odious Catalogue all the follies of his youth and errors of his life. By the which artifice, the beſt man in the world, much more the beſt Society of men may be rendred odious enough. It is well enough known, that the healthfulleſt body is not without ſome humours, which if they were all drawn together, into ſome one part or member, would make an ill and dangerous ſpectacle: but whileſt they lye diſperſed in the whole maſs of blood, where there is a vaſt predominancy of the good, or elſe are lockt up in their private cells, *glandulæ* or other receptacles, till they ſhall be critically evacuated, do in the mean time, little or nothing indanger or deform ſuch a body. I need not apply this to the caſe in hand. To conclude therefore; Were there but either ſo much Charity and Humanity as ought to be in Men and Chriſtians, or ſo much unprejudicacy as becomes wiſe and good men, uſed in this matter; we ſhould inſtead of reproaching the failings or miſcarriages of a few, heartily thank God for that remarkable Holineſs, Humility and Charity that is yet alive and warm in the breaſts

breaſts of ſo many of the Divines of this Church in this cold and degenerate Age. And for the reſt we ſhould think of that ſaying of *Tacitus*, *Vitia erunt donec homines, ſed neque hæc continua, & meliorum interventu penſantur.*

CHAP. II.

Of the more remote and leſs obſerved Cauſes of the infelicity of this Church; ſuch as 1. *The Reign of Queen* Mary *and return of Popery under her in the Infancy of the Reformation.* 2. *The bad proviſion for Miniſters in Corporations,* &c. 3. *Frequent Wars.* 4. *The liberty in Religion that Trade ſeems to require.* 5. *The ſecret deſigns of Atheiſts and Papiſts.*

HItherto I have only noted and refuted the Scandals and Contumelies caſt upon this Church, which how groundleſs and unreaſonable ſoever they are, yet do not a little miſchief when they are whiſpered in corners, and inſinuated in Conventicles.

I might have reckoned up ſome more of the ſame nature, and as eaſily have diſproved them; but they are either reducible to thoſe we have touched, or will fall under conſideration in due time.

I now

I now proceed from thoſe Imaginary, to inquire into and conſider of the true and real Cauſes of the preſent diſaffection to the *Engliſh* Reformation, and they will be found to be of ſeveral kinds; but I will not trouble my ſelf curiouſly to diſtinguiſh them into exact Claſſes, contenting my ſelf faithfully to relate them, and repreſent their peculiar malignant influences. And in this Chapter I will bring into view theſe five following.

1. It was the misfortune, and is the great diſadvantage of this Church, that it was not well confirmed and ſwadled in its Infancy. It is the obſervation of wiſe men, that it greatly contributes to the duration and longevity of any Society, to have a good time of Peace in its Minority, and not to have been put upon difficulties and tryals till its limbs and joints were ſetled and confirmed, that is, till the people were competently inured to the Laws, and the Conſtitutions by time digeſted into Cuſtoms and made natural to them. The State of *Sparta* remained intire without any conſiderable change in its Conſtitution or Laws the longeſt of any Society we have read of: And *Lycurgus* the Law-giver and Founder of that Commonwealth, is thought to have taken an effectual

courſe to make it ſo durable by this ſtratagem. When he had framed the body of their Laws, he pretends occaſion of Travail to conſult the Oracle at *Delphos* about their affairs, but firſt takes an Oath of all the *Lacedemonians* to preſerve the Laws in being inviolable till his return. Which having done, he reſolvedly never returns to them again. By this means whileſt the people were by the Religion of their Oath and a long expectation of his delayed return, for a long time uſed to the Conſtitutions he had eſtabliſhed, they grew ſo well practiſed in them, that at laſt Cuſtom had habituated and even naturalized them to them, that they became unchangeable. Agreeable hereunto is the obſervation of our own Lawyers, that the Common Law, as they call it, is never grievous to the people, and ſeldome repealed, whatever defects are in it, as Statute-Laws frequently are; becauſe long Cuſtom and Uſe hath fitted either that to the men or the men to it, that all things run eaſily and naturally that way. It is obſerved alſo by Divines, That when God Almighty gave a peculiar Body of Laws to the people of *Iſrael*, he took not only the opportunity of their ſtraits and adverſities at their coming out of *Ægypt*, that his Inſtitutions might the more eaſily be received; but alſo kept

them

them fourty years under the continual education in and exerciſe of thoſe Laws, and that in the Wilderneſs, where they were not likely to take in any other impreſſions, nor have other examples before their eyes to tempt or corrupt them. And beſides all this, in a wonderful providence he ſo ordered it, that all thoſe men that came out of *Ægypt* (except *Caleb* and *Joſhua*) and had obſerved other Cuſtoms and Laws, and ſo might be likely to give beginning to innovation, ſhould all dye before they came into the Land of *Canaan*. That by all theſe means, the Laws he gave them might take the deeper root, and ſo remain unalterable to all generations.

I cannot chooſe but obſerve one thing more to this purpoſe, That when our Bleſſed Saviour had by himſelf and his Apoſtles planted his Religion in the World, though it was ſuch a Law as ſufficiently recommended it ſelf to the minds of men by its own goodneſs, eaſineſs and reaſonableneſs, and therefore was likely to be an *everlaſting Religion* (or Righteouſneſs) as the Prophet *Daniel* calls it; yet for more ſecurity, it pleaſed the Divine Providence to reſtrain the rage of Pagans and Jews for a good while, and to give the Chriſtians above ſixty years of peace, before any conſiderable perſecu-

tion broke in upon them; that in that warm Sun it might ſpread its roots, and get ſome conſiderable ſtrength and footing in the world.

But it was the will of God, that the ſtrength of this new-born Church of *England* ſhould be early tryed. And that it might give proof of its divine extraction, it muſt, like *Hercules*, conflict with Serpents in its cradle, and undergo a ſevere perſecution, the good King *Edward* the Sixth dying immaturely, and Queen *Mary* ſucceeding him in the Throne.

By which means it came to paſs, that as this Infant-Reformation gave egregious proof of its intrinſick truth and reaſonableneſs, many ſealing it with their blood; ſo it had this diſadvantage (that we are all this while repreſenting) namely, that by reaſon of this perſecution a great number of the Miniſters and other members of this Church, were driven into other Countreys for refuge and ſhelter from the ſtorm; and there, were (as it's eaſie to imagine) tempted with novelty, and diſtracted with variety of Rites and Cuſtoms, before they were well inſtructed in the reaſons, or habituated to the practice of their own. And hereupon (as it is uſu-

ally

ally obſerved of *Engliſh* Travailers) brought home with them thoſe foreign faſhions, the fond ſingularity of which is ſtill very taking with too many to this day.

I ſay, thus it came to paſs, that thoſe that went out from us, returned not again to us when they did return, in regard that before they were well inured to the *Engliſh* Reformation, they became inamoured of the Rites of other Churches, not much conſidering whether they were better, ſo long as they were freſher and newer, nor minding that there are oft-times reaſons that make one Form neceſſary to be eſtabliſhed in one place or people, and not in another, when otherwiſe it is poſſible they may be both indifferent in themſelves, but not equally fit to the humour and cuſtome of the people, or conſonant to the Civil Conſtitutions; nor yet obſerving that many things were taken up and brought into uſe in other Churches not upon choice but neceſſity, not becauſe they were abſolutely better in themſelves, but the ſtate of affairs ſo requiring. As for inſtance; where the Reformation had not at firſt the countenance of the Civil Government, there the Reformers were conſtrained to enter into particular confederations with one another; from whence Presbyterian Government ſeems

to

to have taken its riſe. I ſay, theſe Exiled *Engliſh* Proteſtants not entring into ſo deep a ſearch into the ſpecial cauſes or occaſions of thoſe different Rites and Forms they found in the places whither they fled for ſuccour, as to diſcover whether they were ſtrictly Religious or meerly Political: but obſerving ſome pretexts of Scripture to be made for them, and in proceſs of time, during their abode in thoſe parts being uſed to them, and by uſe confirmed in them; they at laſt, when they might with ſafety return to *England* again, came home laden with theſe Foreign Commodities, and crying them up with a good grace, found too many Chapmen for ſuch Novelties. Thus as the children of *Iſrael*, even then when they had Bread from Heaven, Angels food, longed for the Onions and Garlike of *Ægypt*, remembring how ſweet thoſe were to them under their bitter bondage, and had upon all occaſions, and upon every pet or diſguſt, a mind to return thither: So theſe men retained as long as they lived a lingring after thoſe entertainments which they found then very pleaſant when other was denyed them; and ſo much the more, in that, as I ſaid before, they received a tincture of theſe before they had well imbibed or ſufficiently underſtood the reaſons of the Church of *England*.

And

And though theſe men are now dead, yet the Childrens Teeth are ſtill ſet on edge with the ſowre Grapes their Fathers have eaten. For thoſe perſons being conſiderable for their Zeal againſt Popery, and very much recommended to the eſteem of people at their return, by the travail and hardſhip they had underwent for the Proteſtant profeſſion, were eaſily able with great advantage to communicate their Sentiments and propagate their Prejudices amongſt the Members of this Church. Here therefore I think we may juſtly lay the firſt Scene of the Diſtractions of this Church.

A ſecond Cauſe may be reckoned the bad and incompetent proviſion for a Learned and Able Miniſtry in the Corporations and generality of great Pariſhes in *England*.

It is eaſie to obſerve, that the multitudes of Opinions that deform and trouble this Church, are generally hatcht and nurſed up in the Corporations, Market-Towns, and other great places; whereas the leſſer Countrey Villages are for the moſt part quiet, and peaceably comply with Eſtabliſh't Orders. And if I ſhould ſay, that not only the Diſſatisfaction with the Rites and Government

of

of the Church, but also the Convulsions and Confusions of State, took their Origin from the bad humours of those greater Societies or Congregations of people, I suppose I should say no more than what the observation of every considerative man will allow and confirm.

Now he that searching for a reason of this difference shall impute it either to the Ease, Fulness and Luxury of the former, whereby they have leisure and curiosity to excogitate Novelties, and spirit and confidence to maintain and abett them, whilest the latter tired with hard labour, neither trouble themselves nor others, but apply themselves to till the ground, and earn their bread with the sweat of their brows: or to the multitude and great concourse of people in the former, amongst whom Notions are more easily started, better protected, and parties sooner formed for the defence and dissemination of them. He, I say, that discourses thus, gives a true account for so much, but searches not far enough to the bottom. For had there been an able Learned Orthodox Clergy setled in such places, they by their wisdome and vigilance, would in a great measure have obviated all beginnings of these disorders; partly by principling the minds of men with sound Doctrine,

Doctrine, partly convincing Gain-ſayers, and eſpecially rendring the Government of the Church lovely and venerable by their wiſe deportment.

In order therefore hereunto, there ought to have been the moſt liberal Maintenance and ingenuous Encouragement ſetled upon ſuch important places. That where the work was greateſt, and the importance moſt conſiderable, the motives to undertake it might be ſo too. To the intent that the moſt able and judicious Clergy-men might have been invited to, and ſetled upon thoſe places that moſt needed them. But contrariwiſe it is moſt viſible, that in thoſe places where moſt Skill is to be exerciſed and moſt Labour to be undertaken, there is little Revenue to encourage the Workman.

In a little obſcure Pariſh or Country Village often-times there is a well endowed Church, but in theſe great ones, generally, where the Flock is great, the Fleece is ſhorn to the Shepherds hands, and ſo pittiful a pittance left to the Curate or Miniſter, that he can ſcarce afford himſelf Books to ſtudy, nor perhaps Bread to eat, without too ſervile a dependance upon the Benevolence of his richer Neighbours; By which means either his

his Spirit is broken with Adverſity, or the Dignity of his Office obſcured in the meanneſs of his condition, or his Influence and Authority evacuated, having neither wherewith to live charitably nor hoſpitably; or all theſe together: nay, it is well, if, to help himſelf under theſe Preſſures, he is not tempted to a ſordid Connivance at, or Complyance with all thoſe Follies and Irregularities he ſhould correct and remedy. And ſo like *Eſau*, ſell his Birthright (the Dignity of the Prieſthood) for a meſs of Pottage.

Now how this comes to paſs, that the greateſt Cures have generally the leaſt Maintenance, is eaſily found; for it is well enough known that in thoſe Times when the Popes had a Paramount Power in *England*, a great part of the Tythes and Revenues of Churches were by their extravagant Authority raviſht from them, and applyed to the Abbies and Monaſteries, and this like an Oſtraciſme fell commonly upon the greateſt Pariſhes, as having the beſt Revenues (and conſequently the more deſirable Booty to thoſe hungry Caterpillers) and ſo the Iſſue was, that the richeſt Churches were made the pooreſt, in many ſuch places little more than the Perquiſites and *Eaſter-Offerings* being left to thoſe that ſhall diſcharge the Cure.

And

And then though afterwards theſe ſuperſtitious Societies were diſſolved, yet the Tythes being not thought fit to be reſtored to their reſpective Churches, the conſequence is, that thoſe places which ought for the good both of Church and State to be well provided for, are too often ſupplyed by the moſt inconſiderable Clergy-men, or thoſe men made ſo by the places they ſupply. My meaning is, that by reaſon of the incompetent Legal Maintenance provided for ſuch Miniſters, the people have it in their power either to corrupt an eaſie and neceſſitous man, or to ſtarve out a worthy and inflexible one; and ſo whatever the humour of the place ſhall be, it is uncontroulable and incurable.

To remedy theſe inconveniencies, it hath of late pleaſed His Majeſty and the Parliament, to make ſome proviſion ſo far as concerns the City of *London*, and it is hoped the ſame wiſdom will in time take like care of other great places in the ſame condition; for till ſome ſuch courſe be taken, it will be in vain to expect that the Church of *England* or the beſt Laws of Religion that can be deviſed, ſhould either obtain juſt Veneration or due Effect.

3. I account the late Wars another Cauſe of the bad eſtate of the Church and Religion amongſt us. Which may perhaps ſeem the more ſtrange, ſince when men put their Lives moſt in danger, one would think they ſhould then take the moſt care to put their Souls out of danger. Beſides it hath been the wiſdom of moſt Nations to deſire the countenance and incouragement of Religion in all their Martial undertakings. The *Romans* made great ſcruple of enterprizing any thing of that nature, till either their Prieſts (from inſpection of the Sacrifice) or ſome other of their Pagan Oracles had given them the ſignal. And the *Turkiſh Mufti* or High-Prieſt muſt give the *Prime Viſier* his bleſſing before he enters upon the buſineſs. Whether it be that men indeed believe God Almighty to be the *Lord of Hoſts*, and to give Victory to thoſe that ſtand beſt approved with him; or whether it be only that they apprehend that the opinion of being under Gods favour, gives reputation to their Arms, inſpires their men with valour and reſolution, and diſheartens their enemies; or upon whatſoever conſideration: it is certain the matter of Fact is true, and that Religion is of great efficacy in Warlike exploits.

It

It may, I say, therefore seem the more strange, that War should be injurious to that which it seeks to for countenance and encouragement. But most strange of all, that Enemies abroad should make men quarrel with their Friends at home; that Iron and Steel, Wounds and Blows should make men tender-conscienced; that those who can find in their hearts to shed the blood of Men, of Christians, and of their Brethren without remorse, should be so queasie stomached as to scruple every punctilio and nicety in Ecclesiastick matters. And yet he that narrowly considers the rise and progress of our Disorders, will find that the distractions of the Church have kept pace with those of the State; and as before the War our Religious disputes and dissentions were but few to what they came to afterwards, so by every War, they have sensibly increased and grown upon us. For the proof of which I will desire the Reader to look no further back than to either of the Wars between this *Kingdom* and the *States* of the *Low Countreys*; and if he do not observe the contempt of Religion to be greater, and the state of the *Church* worse at the end of each of them than at the beginning, I will confess my self too severe an Interpreter of the effects of War. How

War ſhould ſo much debauch the Spirit of a Nation is not my buſineſs to inquire; yet theſe four things following ſeem to give ſome light into it.

1. There are certain Doctrines and Opinions found to be very uſeful in War, and to animate men in Encounters, that are utterly contrary both to Truth and Peace. Such as that of the Fatal Neceſſity of all things; which in the natural conſequence of it is deſtructive of all Virtue. Yet however, the *Turks* find it of great conſequence in their Wars, and it ſerves to animate their *Janizaries* to run deſperately upon the very mouths of Canons. And this ſame perſwaſion, or one very like it, was highly cryed up and found ſerviceable to all bad purpoſes of our late Civil Wars.

2. Thoſe that have occaſion to uſe mens Courage, are forced to be content to wink at their Debaucheries, for fear they ſhould emaſculate the ſpirits of thoſe they imploy, and turn the edge of their mettle. So Drunkenneſs, Whoring, Swearing and Blaſphemy ordinarily paſs under a very eaſie Cenſure amongſt Souldiers. Men whoſe hearts are eagerly ſet upon a War are apt to permit thoſe whoſe hearts and hands they uſe in it, to be afraid

afraid of nothing, that ſo they may be fearleſs of the Enemy. And when the War is over, theſe Extravagancies are not laid down with their Arms: For when Lewdneſs hath gotten a habit, and mens Foreheads are brazen in their wickedneſs, they will not receive a check from diſarmed Religion; but rather harden themſelves againſt it, and account that their Enemy which they are ſure will not give countenance to the Vices they are now ſetled in. In ſhort; War lets looſe the Reins and incourages men to ſin; And when the War is over, theſe men are turned over to the Church for cure of their Souls, as to the Hoſpital for their bodily wounds. But no man will wonder if theſe men have no great kindneſs to the Church, which forbids them the liberty and pleaſure the Camp allowed them; eſpecially if it alſo preſcribe them a ſevere courſe, and make their Conſciences ſmart for the ſins they have formerly practiſed with pleaſure, and have yet a mind to.

3. War hath its peculiar Laws different vaſtly from thoſe of the Church and of every well ordered Common-wealth too. The hazards and neceſſities of War make many things lawful there, that are otherwiſe abominable; as to make no difference betwixt

things Sacred and Prophane, to pull down Churches, and do other ſuch horrid things as nothing but War can palliate. And from hence it is too ordinary for men to be led on by Cuſtome, ſo as in time they forget the Differences of things altogether; and the Church and the Stable, the Prieſt and the Peaſant are all one to them.

4. The meer diſuſe of Religion and its Offices antiquates the obligations of it with many. When men have long heard the noiſe of Drums and Trumpets, they are deaf to the ſtill voice of the Goſpel; and after long converſation with Iron and Steel, the Weapons of the Spiritual Warfare are of no force with them. Then, inſtead of Prayers men learn to curſe and ſwear, and by diſuſe of Religion grow to forget it and ſlight it; and from not going to Church for a time (upon neceſſity) grow to plead a priviledge not to come at it at all.

Since then the Sword doth ſo much prejudice to the Gown, and the Camp to the Church, it is no wonder when we have been ſo often ingaged of late in the one, that the other hath been and is in no better condition.

4. I would in the next place, might I do it without

without offence, take the boldneſs to ſay, that the vaſt increaſe of Trade doth uſually reflect ſome inconvenience upon Eccleſiaſtical affairs. I mean no hurt either to any mens Perſons or Intereſt, I envy no mens Proſperity and Wealth; It is far from my thoughts to wiſh the Tide of Trade dammed up: for I confeſs it is hugely advantageous to the publick, as well as to private perſons in many reſpects. It much raiſes the parts and ſharpens the wits of a Nation by foreign converſation, to which ſome apply that paſſage of the Prophet *Daniel*, Chap. 12. 4. *Many ſhall paſs to and fro, and knowledge ſhall be increaſed.*

It opens a paſſage to the diſcovery of other Countreys, and of the works of God and Man, of Nature and of Art.

It is the great Incentive and the great Inſtrument of humane Society; it makes all Mankind of one body, and by mutual intercourſe to ſerve the occaſions, ſupply the needs, and miniſter to the delight and entertainment one of another.

It inlarges the Minds of men as well as their Fortunes; inſomuch that any Nation is unpolite, unbred, and half barbarous without it.

It inures men to hardſhip and danger, and inſtructs them in ſubtilty and all the Arts of living, and ſelf-ſecurity.

It adds much to the beauty, power and ſtrength of a Nation, and to the riches and revenue of the Prince.

Yet all this notwithſtanding, I muſt crave leave to ſay, that the Inlargement of Trade hath uſually been attended with as much Latitude of Conſcience, and the heat of that with as much coldneſs and indifferency in Religion. It is commonly obſerved to introduce great diverſity of Opinions, and conſequently to abate of mens Zeal for, and Reverence of, an Uniformity in what was before eſtabliſht. For men by converſing much abroad or with Strangers, get a tincture of the Humours and Perſwaſions, of the Cuſtoms and Sentiments of thoſe Perſons with whom, and Places where, they have to do. And this is moſt remarkably true of the *Engliſh*, whoſe temper is not ſo ſtubborn and inflexible as that of ſome other People, nor ſo faſtuoſe and contemptuous of other mens Opinions and Practices. Their good nature prompts to look and think favourably upon ſuch things as they ſee in requeſt with others;

and

and from hence they proceed to admiration, and at laſt to affect the novelty; and then they bring over with them and ſet to ſale at home many a new fangle amongſt other vendible commodities.

The wiſe Law-giver of the *Lacedemonians*, of whom I have had heretofore occaſion to ſpeak, in contemplation of this danger, and that the Laws and Government might not be diſturbed with Novelty, abſolutely forbad Trade or Traffick, and ſo much as travailing into other Countreys, leſt the Citizens ſhould barter away their own Laws and Cuſtoms for thoſe of other Cities. But thanks be to God, there is no neceſſity of having recourſe to ſuch a violent Remedy; the Laws of our Religion do both admit of, and direct and govern Commerce, and the reaſonableneſs of our Chriſtian Religion in general, and of the *Engliſh* Reformation in particular is ſuch, as that it may be well hoped they may rather gain than loſe Proſelytes by being confronted with any other Inſtitutions, and allure conſiderate men to the embracing of them, whileſt ſome lighter and incogitant perſons may be betrayed by their Curioſity. All the Uſe therefore that I make of this Obſervation concerning Trade is, That ſince there is ſome danger to Religion thereby, all

thoſe that do not make a God of the World, and take Gain for Godlineſs, will think theſe three things following to be reaſonable.

1. That ſince it is plain, the ſame Means will not preſerve Uniformity in Religion, nor conſerve the Reverence and Happineſs of the Church in a Nation vaſtly addicted to Foreign Commerce, as would do where the more ſimple way of Agriculture was attended to (as it was amongſt the *Spartans* and this Nation formerly) that therefore there may be ſuch Laws provided, and ſuch care taken as that the one be not diſcouraged, nor the other corrupted.

2. That every man will not only take care to inform himſelf in the grounds of his own Profeſſion of Religion, but alſo have ſo much Charity towards the Governours of his own Countrey and this Church, as to think them both as wiſe and as honeſt as in other places; that by both theſe his Reaſon may be inſtructed, and his Affections ſomewhat compoſed againſt every aſſault of Novelty from other mens Opinions or Practices.

3. That at leaſt we will not think it juſt to impute all the Diſtractions of mens Minds and Quarrels againſt the Church to the badneſs

neſs of its Conſtitution, ſince this point of Trade hath ſuch influence as we ſee both in the Nature of the thing and in the viſible Effects of it.

5. It muſt not be omitted that both Papiſt and Atheiſt, though upon ſeveral grounds, combine their Malice againſt this Church, and uſe all their ſeveral Intereſts and Endeavours to render it as contemptible as they can.

For the former,

Manet altâ mente repôſtum
Judicium Paridis, ſpretæq; injuria formæ.

We know they remember the ſlur we gave them in our Reformation; they are well aware that the decent Order, the Dignity and antient Gravity of this Church, reproves and ſhames the Pageantry of theirs. They forget not how often the eminent Abilities of our Church-men have baffled theirs; therefore they are to be reckoned upon as immortal Enemies. They know, nothing ſtands ſo much in the way of their Deſigns as the Church of *England*. This hath the countenance of the Laws, the ſupport of Reaſon, the favour of Antiquity, the recommendation

tion of Decency. They, therefore can easily frame themselves to a complaisance towards all other Sects, because they despise them; but here *oderunt dum metuunt*: their fears and danger by this, provoke their endeavours, inflame their anger, and suffer them not so much as to dissemble their spite against it. It is well enough known, how under the disguise of Quakers and other names, they have undermined its reputation and given it what disturbance they can how by their Insinuations into some loose c weaker persons they seek to weaken is powers and draw off her numbers; how they have furnished others with Arguments to impugn it, and subaided all unquiet pirits against her. They that scruple nothng themselves, nor will suffer any to scrupleany thing in their own Communion, can teach people to be very nice and squeamish in the Church of *England*. They that are altogether for a blind Obedience at home, preach up tenderness of Conscience abroad; and when an Implicite Faith will do well enough in *Spain* or *Italy*, *&c.* yet in *England* nothing must content men but Infallible Certainty, and that in the most circumstantial and inconsiderable matters.

Then for the Atheists; They conscious of

of the odiouſneſs of their pretences (though of late arrived at greater impudence than formerly) think it not ſafe to laugh at all Religions at once, though they equally abhor all. Therefore leſt they ſhould ingage too many enemies at once, they deal by Retail, and expoſe to ſcorn the ſeveral Parties of Chriſtians one after another. But to be ſure, the better any Perſwaſion is, the more induſtriouſly they ſet themſelves to depreſs it; as knowing well, if they can bring that into Contempt, they may be ſecure of the other, which muſt one time or other fall of themſelves by reaſon of the unſoundneſs of their Foundations. Beſides it ſeems ſomething below them to ſet their wit againſt a Fanatick, they muſt have higher game, and their Jeſts go off more piquantly when they gratifie the popular envy, by being level'd againſt that which hath a great ſtock of Reputation, and the countenance of publick Laws.

Theſe blind Beetles that roſe out of filth and excrement, and now buz about the world, hope, not only to cover their ſhame, but to increaſe their Party daily by the diviſions of Chriſtians; and therefore labour to inflame the Cauſes, to provoke mens Paſſions and exaſperate their minds one againſt another.

ther. They ſcurrilouſly traduce all that is ſerious, and ſtudy Religion only to find out flaws in it. And what they cannot do by manly Diſcourſe, they endeavour by Buffoonry. In ſhort; It is their manner to dreſs the beſt Religion in the world in a phantaſtical and ridiculous habit, that Boyes may laugh at it, and weak people brought out of conceit with it, and their Worſhips made merry with the Comedy.

Now ſince the Church of *England* is beſet with all theſe Enemies and under the aforeſaid Diſadvantages, it is no wonder if the felicity and ſucceſs of it be not a little diſturbed. It was noted amongſt the Felicities of old *Rome*, as that which gave it the opportunity of growing up to ſo vaſt a Greatneſs, That till it had by degrees ſubdued all its Neighbours, and was now match for all the World, it had never but one Enemy at once to encounter. Whileſt this Church in its firſt times had only thoſe of the Church of *Rome* to conflict with, it eaſily triumphed over them and maintained its Peace and Dignity at home: but that now under the Circumſtances I have repreſented in the five foregoing Particulars it bears up ſo well as it doth,

doth, is an illustrions argument of its Strength and Soundness of Constitution; and they are very severe and uncharitable persons that reckon its Enemies and Misfortunes in the number of its Vices or Faults.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the more immediate Causes of the Distractions of the Church of England; *such as,* 1. *Rashness of popular Judgement.* 2. *Judaism.* 3. *Prejudice.* 4. *Want of true Christian Zeal, in the generality of its Members.*

COming now in this Chapter to enquire into the immediate Causes of the Evils we groan under, I do not see how it is possible to be avoided, but that in touching this sore I must make some body or other smart. And therefore I bespeak so much candour of the Reader that he will believe it is not any delight I take to rake in the wounds of my Brethren and fellow-Christians; but that it is meer compassion to the Souls of men, and good will to the publick Peace, and nothing else, that prompts me to this undertaking. For had any other ends swayed with me, I could better have pursued them in silence and privacy, or at least in the choice of some other

other ſubject than this which is ſo tender and tickliſh. But conſcious of my own ſincerity in the undertaking, and in confidence of a benign interpretation, I proceed.

1. And Firſt, I perſwade my ſelf that it will be manifeſt to any conſiderative and impartial perſon, that a great part of the averſation to the Church of *England*, ariſes from that which is the conſtant and known Adverſary of every thing that is generous and excellent, namely popular Raſhneſs and Injudiciouſneſs.

When weak perſons judge of the Determinations and Counſels of wiſer men, and thoſe that pierce no further than the meer ſurface of things, paſs a Verdict upon thoſe whoſe Reaſons are profound and deep; there can be no good Iſſue expected. It is certain there are many men of honeſt Hearts, who yet have *not ſenſes exerciſed* (as the phraſe of the Apoſtle is) whoſe Intellectuals are either clouded by an unhappy Conſtitution of Body, or were never well opened and enlarged by Education and Study. Thoſe generally not being ſenſible of their own infirmity, nor knowing how little that which they underſtand is, compared with what they are ignorant of, are ready to think there is no larger

Sphere

Sphere of Knowledge than that which themſelves move in; and by reaſon that they do *ad pauca reſpicere, facilè pronunciant*, not foreſeeing the difficulties, eaſily come to a concluſion, and cenſure all that complyes not with their own meaſures.

It's eaſie to obſerve men hugging their own Phancies, and entertaining with ſcorn and contempt things above their capacity, or out of the rode of their meditations. I by no means commend the zeal of that Biſhop, *Virgilius* by name, who became a Martyr for the opinion that there were *Antipodes*, though it was demonſtrably true, and the contrary impoſſible. But I obſerve thence, how ſevere and raſh a bolt folly will diſcharge. And I little doubt, but that if a man ſhould aſſert the mobility of the Earth, or ſome other ſuch opinion (which yet the generality of the Learned are agreed in,) and do it with the like conſtancy that *Virgilius* did, (if he had the people for his Judges) he would be in danger of the ſame Fate.

But to come nearer my purpoſe; It is an Obſervation, not more antient than true, That the ſame thing ſeldome pleaſes the many and the few; Wiſe men generally take middle

middle Counsels, as finding by Experience, not only Peace but Truth for the most part to be there placed. The Vulgar contrariwise are altogether for Extreams, and when one Extream disgusts them, run violently to the other without stop or stay. οἱ ἐν μέσῳ ὄντες ἀμφοῖν ἔργον κέκτηνται, said the Historian, The middle opinion is condemned by both extreams, and those that stand by it, (like those that go about to part a fray) receive blows from both sides.

Erasmus, the glory of his Time and Countrey, for the sagacity of his wit and simplicity of his temper, because he came not up to the height of either of the then contending Parties (though he was admired by the Wiser) was mortally hated, reproached and persecuted by the Vulgar of both Parties.

It is not much to the honour of Mr. *Calvin*, that he is said to have written to *Bucer* who was employed in the *English* Reformation, That he should take care to avoid *moderate* Counsels in Religion. In which advice he complyed but too much with the humor of the Vulgar, especially of this Nation; at least if the observation of a witty Writer of the last Age be well taken. But perhaps it is not the Levity, but the Spirit

and Vigor and natural Courage of the people, that middle Counſels are not acceptable to them: but however, it is eaſie to remember, that when in the late Times ſome diſguſts were taken at the publick management of Affairs, no Propoſition or Expedient would atone the fault, or propitiate the people, but the utter Subverſion of the Government. When Popery diſpleaſes, we think our ſelves never ſafe till we are run as far the other way; and again when thoſe that have been at the higheſt pitch of Fanaticiſm, ſuſpect their ſtanding, and have a new qualm come over them, there is then no remedy, no ſafety, no Ark but the Church of *Rome*.

Now the Church of *England* cutting by a thred (as it were) between both theſe Extreams, eſcapes not a ſevere Cenſure on either hand. Thoſe of the Church of *Rome* cannot but confeſs, that all is good in our Liturgy, only they ſay it is defective in many things that they have a great value for; Proteſtants on the other ſide generally acknowledge the main to be good, but ſome things they account redundancies, which they would have taken away: And ſo between them both they give a glorious Teſtimony to this Church as guilty of the Faults of neither Extream, whileſt yet ſhe is accuſed of both.

But

But that which I chiefly intend is this; That a great part of men have not their Minds elevated above the Horizon of their Bodies, nor take an eſtimate of any thing, but by its impreſſion upon their Senſes. From whence it muſt needs follow, that whatever moſt powerfully ſtrikes them, muſt alſo be moſt admired by ſuch perſons, and nothing elſe.

Now the Liturgy of our Church being compoſed plainly, gravely and modeſtly, no turgid or ſwelling expreſſions, no novelty of phraſe or method, no luxuriancy of wit or phancy, ſeems therefore dull and flat to ſuch mens apprehenſions. And on the other ſide, ſuch Prayers as are occaſionally conceived and uttered by men of hot tempers (like themſelves) with a torrent of words, and in a melting tone, ſtrike them with great admiration, and almoſt tranſport them. Inſomuch that they are ready to conclude (without more ado) the former to be a cold formal Service, but theſe latter to be the very Dictates and Impulſes, the Breathings of the Holy Spirit.

And ſo for Preaching; Thoſe Divines that deliver themſelves gravely and conſide-

rately, that take care to *ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs*, that endeavour calmly and modeſtly to inlighten the minds of their Hearers, ſeem to ſuch people heavy and unedifying. But if there be a ſort of heady and incogitant Preachers, that have more heat than light, that thunder in mens ears with a ſtentorian noiſe, and make uſe of ſuch dreadful expreſſions as raiſe the humours and paſſions of the body, or ſuch ſoft ſimilitudes as demulce and mitigate them, or ſuch myſtical repreſentations as tranſport their imaginations and confound them; thoſe ſeem mighty-powerful-ſoul-ſaving-Preachers. Who ſees not that this muſt needs be a mighty diſadvantage to the Church of *England*, When Devotions ſhall be eſteemed by their noiſe and not by their weight, and Sermons tryed not by their light but heat?

But if to all this, Truth and Falſhood alſo, and that in the moſt ſublime points, and, which is more, Expediency it ſelf muſt be decided at Vulgar Tribunals, ſo that there ſhall not be that Doctrine ſo profound or nice, which every man will not take upon him to determine, nor that Reaſon ſo ſubtle, which the craſſeſt minds ſhall not pretend to underſtand, nor that Rule or Art of Government, which ſhall not fall under vulgar cogni-

cognizance; if every mans Mind become the Standard and Touchſtone of every Truth: it is impoſſible (upon the ſuppoſitions before laid) but there muſt be diſſentions, diſputes and diſtractions in ſuch a Church, and yet neither the Doctrine, Diſcipline, Liturgy, nor Miniſters thereof be to blame. For unleſs the Reformers of ſuch a Society be no wiſer than the Vulgar, and the Clergy and Governours and all Learned men have the ſame ſentiments with the people; unleſs, I ſay, all could be alike wiſe or alike weak, (where all will be alike Judges) it is abſolutely impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe.

Thoſe therefore of the Church of *Rome* have a cure for this; They appropriate all Judgement to the Clergy, and deal with the reſt of Mankind as Sots and Ideots, not permitting them to read the Scriptures in the Vulgar Tongue, leſt they ſhould grow too wiſe to be governed; nay, they will not allow them to be maſters of common ſenſe, but requre them to believe the moſt contradictory Propoſitions, and make that an Article of Faith which a man may confute by his Fingers ends. This is an admirable way to wean them from their own Underſtanding, to unlearn them Diſputes, and to exerciſe them to believe in and obey their Rulers.

This way makes the people Sheep indeed, but ſilly ones God-wot.

But the Church of *England* hath no ſuch Antidote of Diſputes and Diviſions as this is. She makes not her ſelf the Miſtris of mens Faith, nor impoſes upon their Underſtandings; She teacheth that our Saviour hath delivered the Mind of God touching the points of neceſſary Belief or eſſential to Salvation fully, and plainly to the capacity of every conſidering man that will uſe the means; and in other leſſer matters debatable amongſt Chriſtians, ſhe allows a judgement of Diſcretion. Only ſince the Peace of the Church often depends upon ſuch points as Salvation doth not, and ſince in many of thoſe, every man is not a competent Judge, but muſt either be in danger of being deceived himſelf and of troubling others, or of neceſſity muſt truſt ſome body elſe wiſer than himſelf: She recommends in ſuch a caſe as the ſafer way for ſuch private perſons to comply with publick Determinations, and in ſo adviſing, ſhe jointly conſults the Peace of the Church and the quiet of mens Conſciences. So all that ſhe challenges is a Reverence, not a blind Obedience. And if after all this, ſome people will be fooliſh, and proud, and contentious, ſhe hath no further Remedy, than

to

to declare them guilty of Sin and Contumacy, and that not sufficing, to cast them out of her Communion. But when all this is done, men may be peevish and wilful, and render the State of that Church unhappy, whose Constitution is neither guilty of Tyranny nor Remisness.

Now if it shall be objected to this Discourse, That this cause from the consideration of the Folly and Injudiciousness of men is too general, and will equally extend to all other Reformed Churches as well as our own, and especially that this might have brought forth all the Evil we complain of, and impute to it, in the former Age as well as now, for as much as the generality of people were not much wiser then, than now. To this I answer in two points.

1. If other Reformed Churches have not found the effects of Ignorance and Arrogance joyned together as well as we (which doubtless they have done more or less) it is not to be ascribed to the happiness of their Constitutions, but to the unhappiness of their outward Circumstances. Their Poverty, Oppression, Persecution, or being surrounded with common Enemies, hath probably prevailed upon them to lay aside or smother their

private Opinions, and to check their animosities, more than our Gratitude to the Almighty for our Eaſe and Peace and Plenty and Liberty hath done, upon us. Who knoweth not that the Church of *Corinth* firſt needed the ſevere check of an Apoſtle for their wantonneſs and diviſions, that *one was of* Paul, *another of* Apollos, *&c.* And who can give a more probable account of this their Luxuriancy, than from the riches, eaſe, plenty and liberty of that City? Or who hath not obſerved, that whileſt the Primitive Chriſtians were in Adverſity ſurrounded with Enemies and under Pagan perſecuting Emperours, ſo long they had one heart and mind, they ſubmitted their private phancies and peculiar ſentiments to publick ſafety; but the ſame conſtituted Churches quickly broke out into Quarrels and Factions, as ſoon as a warm Sun of Proſperity ſhone upon them? We have reaſon accordingly not to charge our unhappineſs upon our Religion, nor our troubles upon our Proſperity, but to lay them at the right door, of our Folly and Weakneſs.

2. That theſe Evils broke not out in our Church ſooner, ſince the Seeds of them were ſown long ago, is due to the joy and contentment that men generally took at their firſt emerging

emerging out of the darkneſs and ſuperſtitions of the Church of *Rome* by the Reformation, which was proportionable to the deliverance; and ſo great, that for a time it ſuffered them not to be very ſolicitous about little diſputes or ſcrupuloſities. Like the people of *Greece* when the *Romans* at the *Iſthmian* Games by a publick Herald pronounced them and their Countrey free, they forgat the contentions they came together about, and uſed to be infinitely taken with. But when the novelty of this great Bleſſing was over, Proteſtants forgat the great and intolerable burdens they had eſcaped, and then began ſcrupulouſly to weigh every petty inconvenience; and (by the goodneſs of God) not having a publick Enemy to unite them, quarrel amongſt themſelves. This therefore may be admitted as one cauſe of our unhappineſs.

2. That which I would aſſign as a ſecond cauſe, I know not well what name to give to it: But for want of a better expreſſion, I will adventure to ſay, That a great part of this Nation having been leavened with *Jewiſh Superſtition* or *Jewiſh Traditions*, hath thereby been indiſpoſed to an uniform reception of, and perſeverance in the Reformation of Religion held forth by this Church. How this ſowre leaven ſhould

ſhould get in amongſt us is not very eaſie to determine: Some Stories would incline a man to think that it had been in the veins of this Countrey, ever ſince it firſt received the Chriſtian Faith; for the greateſt difficulty *Auſtin* the Monk found here, was to bring the Inhabitants from the obſervation of *Eaſter*, and ſome other Rites according to the manner of the *Jewiſh* and *Eaſtern* Churches, to that of the *Roman* and *Weſtern*; and the doing it (as the Story tells us) coſt the lives of twelve hundred Monks, who it ſeems ſtubbornly oppoſed his Innovation. Which (by the way) is a good argument that this Church owes not its firſt Chriſtianity to the Church of *Rome* or this Monaſtick Apoſtle, as they would perſwade us; ſince it is plain by this paſſage, that he made our Anceſtors only *Romaniſts*, but found them Chriſtians before, and perhaps of a better and more generous race of Religion than that he ingraffed upon the old ſtock. But I will make no uſe of this; for perhaps we may find the riſe of this *Judaiſm* nearer hand, if we obſerve that the great Patriarchs of the Non-conformity, ſuch as *Cartwright*, *Ainſworth*, *H. Broughton* and others, were great Students of the *Rabbinical Writings*, and the main of their Learning lay that way; and as by this ſort of Study (which was rare in

thoſe

thoſe dayes,) they got the reputation of great *Rabbies*, ſo perhaps they might not only by this means be bewitched with the *Jewiſh* fancies themſelves, but propagate their unhappy Sentiments through their followers to this generation.

But howſoever it came to paſs, the matter of Fact will appear undeniably true, That a vein of *Judaiſm* runs through the whole Body of the diſſenters from the Church of *England*. Of which I will give ſome Inſtances.

And the *firſt* ſhall be their grand *Hypotheſis*, *That nothing is lawful in the ſervice of God, but what is expreſly preſcribed in Scripture.* This is the Characteriſtical Doctrine of that Party, and in confidence of the truth of which, they cry out of us for uncommanded Rites, and humane Inventions and little leſs than Idolatry. Now whoſoever well conſiders this Tenet, will find it ſo irrational in it ſelf, ſo ſervile and deſtructive of all Chriſtian Liberty, and making ſo ill reflections upon the Goodneſs of God, (as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew hereafter) that it is not to be imagined how it ſhould enter into the minds of men, much leſs find ſuch entertainment and ſo zealous patronage, amongſt ſo many honeſt and devout men,

men, were it not, that they ſtudied the Old Teſtament better than the New, and graffed their Chriſtianity upon the ſtock of *Judaiſm*. And the caſe muſt be after this manner. They conſidering and obſerving how punctually God preſcribed ſome very little matters touching the Temple and National Worſhip of the *Jews* in the Law of *Moſes*, carry this notion along with them to the New Teſtament, and thence infer, That Chriſt Jeſus muſt needs have alſo as punctually determined all the Rituals of the Chriſtian Worſhip: Otherwiſe he *is not faithful in his houſe as* Moſes *was in his*, (for that Scripture is brought to prove it). That all abſolutely Neceſſaries are ſo determined by our Saviour we readily grant them, and that all thoſe Rites that are preſcribed by him are neceſſary to be obſerved, we will yield them; but that nothing is lawful but what is to be found ſo preſcribed, we utterly deny, and they will never be able to prove. Nor indeed would they ever have been led by any principle of reaſon to think of or expect ſuch a thing, had it not been by the aforeſaid prejudice. But having gotten that notion into their heads, they will fancy the New Teſtament to comply with it, or writhe it to their ſenſe, though with never ſo much violence.

Of

Of affinity with the former is another Notion of theirs, *That all Princes and Law-givers are bound to conform the Municipal Laws of their several Dominions to the Institutions of* Moses; and where this is not done, *sc.* where Princes make other Decisions of Cases, or appoint other Punishments than that Law allows, they are in danger to have their Constitutions declared null, and themselves irreligious.

This is a mistake as wide as the former, highly injurious to Soveraign Princes and dangerous to Kingdoms and States, in a great measure disannulling the publick Laws, and stripping the Governours of all proper Legislative power.

But that which I consider now in this mistake, is not the consequence and Effects, but the rise and Causes of it, which seems to be no other than the fondness the *Jews* had to their Laws, and which they express in their Writings, as if those Laws God gave them by *Moses*, were not only best for them, but best in themselves also. The foundation of which Error is both detected and confuted by this consideration, That God was not only the God, but the temporal Prince of the

the *Jews* in a peculiar manner, ſo as he is not of any other people in the world; he calls himſelf their King, appoints his Lieutenants and Vicegerents, divides his Subjects their Inheritance, gives them Laws, takes up a Reſidence amongſt them, appoints their way of Addreſs to him for Judgement and reſolution of weighty and extraordinary Caſes, and reſerves many Caſes to himſelf, and ſometimes inflicts Puniſhments by his own hand. Any man that conſiders theſe things well, will never go about to make thoſe Laws oblige other Nations, or require neceſſarily all Princes to conform their Policies to that of *Judæa*, till he can perſwade himſelf that every Nation hath the peculiar Priviledge of the *Jews*, and its Government to be a Theocracy.

A *third* Inſtance ſhall be their notion of *Excommunication*, which they hold *muſt be denounced by a Synod or Presbytery, and the Prince as well as the people muſt be ſubject to the ſentence.* And this againſt all Rules of Government, the Prerogatives of Princes and the Peace of Kingdoms. But becauſe it was thus amongſt the *Jews*, or at leaſt ſome of the Writers of that Nation ſay ſo, (whether true or falſe is not well conſidered) therefore this is the only Goſpel way.

I muſt

I muſt by no means omit their Superſtition about the *Lords Day*, which muſt be called a *Sabbath* too, though ſuch name is no where given it either in the New Teſtament or in any antient Writer that I know of; but contrariwiſe alwayes oppoſed to it. But that's the leaſt matter. The *Lords Day* with theſe men muſt have all the nicety of obſervation that the *Jewiſh Sabbath* had; and which is yet worſe, *ſuch obſervation thereof* made one of the *principal parts of Religion*. And becauſe God appointed the *Sabbath* amongſt the *Jews* to *be a ſign between him and them*, and to diſtinguiſh them from all other people, therefore in the New Teſtament the ſuperſtitious obſervation of the *Lords Day* muſt be the *principal Character of a godly man*. He that conſiders well this matter can find no original of it but perfect Judaiſm introduced into Chriſtianity. And methinks any unprejudiced man ſhould be convinced of this by this one obſervation, That this kind of obſervation of the *Lords Day* diſtinguiſhes this ſort of *Engliſh* Proteſtants from all other Proteſtants and Chriſtians in the whole world beſides; It being in no Church or Countrey obſerved with that punctuality and in that Sabbatical manner, as by thoſe perſons. Whence it's plain, that ſuch

ſuch obſervation thereof could neither be derived from Chriſtianity in general, nor from Proteſtantiſm as ſuch, but meerly from a Jewiſh tincture theſe perſons have received.

A *fifth* Inſtance ſhall be their Doctrine of *Abſolute Predeſtination.* Which though it be not peculiar to theſe men, yet is ſo univerſally and ardently embraced by the men of that way, as is ſcarce to be parallel'd. And he that ſeeks the Source of ſo odd an Opinion, can in my opinion pitch no where more probably, than upon the abſolute Decree of God to favour the poſterity of *Abraham* for his ſake. It pleaſed God to beſtow the good Land of *Canaan* upon the deſcendents of that good man, and he reſolved and declared he would do it without reſpect to their deſerts: now this is made a ſufficient ground to conclude, That accordingly as he diſpoſed in this Temporal affair, ſo he will proceed by the ſame way of Prerogative in determining the Eternal Doom of Men.

I will add but one more, which is their *ſuperſtitious obſervation and interpretation of Prodigies.* To this a great number of this Party are ſo addicted, that every unuſual Accident, every new Appearance in the World, be it in Heaven above or in the Earth

Earth below, is presently commented upon, and applications made of the errand of it: though for the most part with Folly as manifest as is the Uncharitableness, yet with Confidence as if it were undoubtedly true, that God governed the affairs of the World by as visible a Providence now, as he did heretofore in the Land of *Judæa*; and the remembrance of what he did *then*, seems to be the only imaginable account of this conceit of theirs *now*.

Many other Instances might be given of this kind, but I have made choice of these, because they contain the principal Doctrines and most Characteristical Practices of the Non-conformists; and these carrying so plainly the marks of *Judaism* upon them, and being no otherwise accountable than upon those Principles, I think I said not improperly, when I called *Judaism* the second Cause of our Unhappiness; since any man may easily see, that such Notions and Principles as these are, must needs indispose those that are leavened with them, to Conformity to, or perseverance in, the Church of *England*.

3. But if the weakness of Judgement or bad Instruction only obstructed the prosperity of this Church, it were not very difficult

to find a Remedy: but alas! the minds of a great number of men are under such Prejudices as have barricado'd them up and rendred them almost inaccessible; and that I reckon as a third Cause of our Distractions.

Prejudice is so great an evil that it is able to render the best Discourses insignificant, the most powerful Arguments and convictive evidence ineffectual; this stops mens Ears against *the voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely.*

This alone was able to seal up the Eyes of the Gentile World against the Sun of Righteousness when he shone upon them in his brightest glory, and to confirm them in their blind Idolatries, when the God that made Heaven and Earth gave the fullest discoveries of himself that it was fit for mankind to expect.

Upon the account of this the *Jews* rejected that *Messias* they had so long expected, and gloried in before he came, though he exactly answered all the Characters of Time, Place, Lineage, Doctrine and Miracles that their own Writings had described him by.

Nay, 'twas Prejudice abused the honest minds

minds of the Diſciples themſelves, ſo that they could not for a long time believe thoſe things Chriſt Jeſus told them from the Scripture muſt come to paſs, only becauſe they were againſt the grain of their Education, and were croſs to the perſwaſions they had received in common with the reſt of the *Jews*.

No wonder then if the Church of *England* ſuffer under Prejudice amongſt thoſe, that have not only ſeen it ſtigmatized with the odious marks of Popery and Superſtition, and had been drawn into a *Solemn League and Covenant* againſt it, as if it had been an act of the higheſt Religion to defie and execrate it, and ſo had both their Credits and their Conſciences engaged againſt it; But alſo had lived to ſee it proſcribed for near twenty years by a prevailing Faction.

Few have that Generoſity and ſtrength of mind to bear up againſt the torrent of times, or Confidence enough to oppoſe the impetuouſneſs of common vogue and prevailing opinion: There are not many have the ſagacity to diſcern the true images of things through thoſe thick miſts that cunning Politicians caſt about them. It is very ordinary to take the condemnation of any Perſon or Party

for a ſufficient Proof of the Accuſation, and to think the Indictment proved, if the Sentence be paſt with common conſent. It was enough both with the *Jews* and *Gentiles* againſt our Saviour, that he was condemned as a Malefactor, the Ignominy of his Croſs was a greater Argument againſt him, with the generality, than the excellency of his Doctrine or Evidence of his Miracles was for him.

This Church was dealt with like the Great Lord *Strafford*, run down by common Fame, oppreſt by Neceſſity, not by Law or Reaſon, and made a Sacrifice to the inraged Multitude.

The Arguments againſt it were not weighed, but numbered: As that Great Lords Impeachment was of Accumulative Treaſon, ſo was the Churches of Popery; there was more in the Concluſion, than could be made out by the Premiſes; and in the ſumm total, than in the particulars of which it conſiſted: for though no one point of Popery or Superſtition cou'd be proved againſt it, yet it muſt be ſo upon the whole. This being agreed, the cry then is, *Crucifige*, deſtroy it root and branch. And now was the Church ſeemingly dead, and (as I ſaid before) buried

ried too for near twenty years; but when by the wonderful Providence of God it was raised again, as it was matter of equal Joy and wonder to all such as were not too far under the power of these Prejudices, so it could not be expected otherwise but that weak and timerous persons should run from it as from a Ghost or Spectre.

To all which add, That it was the corrupt Interest of some to deceive others into an ill opinion of it; partly as being inraged that by the Churches unexpected Revival, they lost its Inheritance which they had divided amongst themselves, partly being conscious to themselves that by reason of their no more than vulgar abilities, they could be fit to fill no extraordinary place in the Church, and yet were not able to content themselves with any ordinary one, and therefore chose to set up a Party against it, and become Leaders of a Faction, since they might not be Governours of a Church. And when it is come to that pass *that by this craft we get our Livings*, like the Silversmiths at *Ephesus*, no wonder if Apostolical Doctrine and Government be cryed down, and the Great *Diana* be cryed up. The summ is this; Some men were blindly led by their Education, others by their Interest, a third

ſort by their Reputation, to make good what they had ingaged themſelves and others in; and theſe three things are able to form a great Party againſt the Church.

4. The Fourth and Laſt Cauſe, (and I wiſh it be not the greateſt) of the Diſtractions and ill Eſtate of this Church, is the want of true Chriſtian Zeal, and of a deep and ſerious ſenſe of Piety; in defect of which hath ſucceeded that wantonneſs, curioſity, novelty, ſcrupuloſity and contention we complain of.

What was it made the Primitive Church ſo unanimous, that it was not crumbled into Parties, nor mouldered away in Diviſions, nor quarrelled about Opinions, nor ſeparated one part from another upon occaſion of little ſcruples? How came it to paſs, (as I obſerved in the Introduction to this Diſcourſe) that all good men were of one way, and all evil men of another, that thoſe that travailed to the ſame City the heavenly *Jeruſalem*, kept the ſame Rode and parted not company?

It could not be that they ſhould be without different apprehenſions, for mens Parts were no more alike, nor their Educati-

ons

ons more equal in those times than now.

There were then several Rites and Ceremonies that might have afforded matter of scruple (if the Christians had been so disposed) as well as now: and I think both more in number, and as lyable to exception as any thing now in use. There was then *bowing towards the East*, observation of *Lent* and other dayes, *distinction of Garments*, and innumerable other Observations in the early dayes of *Tertullian*; and yet neither any Scripture brought to prove them, nor any such proof thought necessary, and yet they were observed without suspicion on one side, or objection on the other. *Harum & aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum, si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies, sed traditio prætenditur auctrix, consuetudo conservatrix & fides observatrix*, saith he in his Book *De Corona militis*.

St. *Austin* saith, in his time *the number and burden of Ceremonies was grown as great as under the Law of* Moses, and therefore wishes for a Reformation thereof, in his Epistles to *Januarius*; yet never thought these things a sufficient ground of Separation from the Church. *Ep.* 118, 119.

There was then some diversity of Expression in which the Governours and Pastors of several Churches delivered themselves, yet did they not dispute themselves hereupon into Parties, nor accuse one another of false Doctrine, or either Side make the division of the Church the Evidence of its Orthodoxy, or the Trophy of its Victory. The true reason then of the different Event of the same Causes then and now, seems to be this, That in those dayes men were sincerely good and devout, and set their hearts upon the main; the huge Consequence and concern of which easily prevailed with those holy men to overlook their private satisfactions. They were intent upon that wherein the Power of Godliness consisted, and upon which the Salvation of Souls depended; and so all *that* was secure, they were not so superstitiously concerned for Rituals, nor so unreasonably fond of Opinions, as to play away the Peace of the Church and the Honour of Religion against trifles and meer tricks of wit and fancy. They considered that they all had one God, one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, in which they all agreed; and these great matters were able to unite them in lesser. They, Good men, found enough to do to mortifie their Passions, to

bear

their burdens of Affliction and Perſecution, to withſtand the Temptations of the Devil, and the contagion of evil Examples from the world, and had not leiſure for thoſe little Diſputes that now imploy the minds of men, and vex the Church. They ſpent their Heat and Zeal another way, and ſo their Spirits were not eaſily inflammable with every petty Controverſie.

But when men grow cold and indifferent about great things, then they become fervent about the leſſer. When they give over to mind a holy Life, and heavenly Converſation, then they grow great Diſputers, and mightily ſcrupulous about a Ceremony. When they ceaſe to ſtudy their own hearts, then they become cenſorious of other men; then they have both the leiſure and the confidence to raiſe Surmiſes and Jealouſies, and to find fault with their Superiours.

In ſhort, then and not till then, do the little Appendages of Religion, grow great and mighty matters in mens eſteem, when the Eſſentials, the great and weighty matters are become little and inconſiderable.

And that this is the Caſe with us in this Nation is too evident to require further proof,

proof, and too lamentable a ſubject for any good Chriſtian to take pleaſure in dilating upon. I conclude therefore, in this Point lyes a great part of the Unhappineſs of this Church and Kingdom.

PART

PART II.

Wherein ſeveral ſerious Conſiderations are propounded, tending to perſwade all Engliſh *Proteſtants to comply with, and conform to, the Religion and Government of this Church, as it is eſtabliſhed by Law.*

CHAP. I.

A Reflection upon divers Wayes or Methods for the Prevention and Cure of Church-Diviſions.

HAving in the former Part of this Diſcourſe, diligently enquired into, and faithfully recited the principal Cauſes of the diſcontents with, and ſeceſſion from this Church; It would now ill beſeem Chriſtian Charity to reſt here; for (God knows)

knows) neither the Evils nor the Cauſes afford any pleaſant ſpeculation.

It was a bad ſtate of things at *Rome* which the Hiſtorian reports in theſe words, *Nec morbos nec remedia pati poſſumus*, That they were come to ſo ill a paſs that they could neither indure their Diſtempers, nor admit of the Remedies. But I perſwade my ſelf, though the condition of our affairs be bad enough, yet that it is not ſo deplorable as to diſcourage all Endeavours of a cure. And in this hope I take the courage to propound the following conſiderations; wherein if I be deceived and miſs of my aim, I ſhall notwithſtanding have that of *Quintilian* to comfort my ſelf withal, *Probabilis eſt cupiditas honeſtorum, & vel tutioris eſt audaciæ tentare ea, quibus eſt paratior venia.*

It hath not been the ſingle Unhappineſs of this Church alone, to be moleſted with Diſputes, loaden with Objections, and diſhonoured by Separation. Nor can it be hoped that where the buſineſs is Religion, and the concern Eternal Life, that men ſhould incuriouſly ſwallow every thing without moving any queſtion or ſtirring any diſpute. And therefore all Churches muſt of neceſſity more or leſs

less have conflicted with the same difficulties we complain of. And consequently the disease being so common, it cannot be but that many and divers Remedies have been tryed and made use of. And out of that store we will in this Chapter make election of such as seem best to fit the condition of the Patient and are most practicable in the Case.

And in the first place, they of the Church of *Rome*, (as many and great Schisms as they have laboured under formerly, yet) now glorying in their Unity and Peace, and upbraiding all others with their respective Distractions, may seem to have arrived at some remarkable skill, and to be fit to be advised withal; and they attribute an admirable efficacy to the following Method.

First, By way of Prevention, they prescribe that the people be kept in profound *Ignorance*, and then they suppose, they will never trouble the Church with Disputes, nor themselves with Scruples. Let them but be blind enough, and they will swallow many a Flye that others strain and boggle at: keep them up in the dark like Birds or Wild Beasts, and you will render them tame and manageable.

They

They affirm Pictures to be Books good enough for the Laity, and ſay, Thoſe are the beſt Sheep that know nothing but their own Fold. *The Prieſts lips*, they confeſs, *ſhould preſerve knowledge*; but ſo they preſerve it from the people, it is no great matter whether they have it themſelves or no.

This Opiate or ſtupefactive Ignorance theſe Empiricks mightily cry up; and for proof of the virtue of it, go but over into *Spain* or *Italy*, and you ſhall obſerve what ſtrange cures it hath done. It hath made as ſagacious people as any in the world naturally, ſo far from Diſputes in Religion, that they ſcarce know what it means. Adminiſter but a large Doſe of this, and it ſhall have the ſame effect the Plague of Darkneſs had in *Ægypt*, that *ſuffered no man to ſtir out of his place.*

But this Advice how ſucceſsful ſoever it hath been in other places, will not be admitted in *England* for two reaſons.

1. If it were commendable in it ſelf, yet it comes too late; for the people of *England* know ſo much already that the only way

way to cure the inconveniences of that, is to let them know more. And as an Excellent Perſon hath well obſerved concerning Atheiſm, *That a little ſmattering in Philoſophy diſpoſes men to it, by intangling them in Second Cauſes which they cannot explicate, but a through inſight into it leads them through that perplexed maze to the diſcovery of the Firſt Cauſe of all things.* So 'tis only ſuperficial knowledge in Chriſtianity that gives occaſion to our troubles, when men think they know, but do not; or becauſe they know a little, conceit they underſtand all that is knowable, and hereupon refuſe inſtruction, and oppoſe their private opinions to the publick wiſdom. Whereas did theſe men ſee further into things, they would then diſcover a reaſon of many things they are now diſſatisfied with, or at leaſt diſtruſt their own underſtandings and grow modeſt and peaceable.

2. Beſides, if this Advice came timely, yet we take the Remedy to be worſe than the Diſeaſe; for we eſteem it better (if one be neceſſary) to erre like Men, than to be driven like Beaſts, or acted like Puppets.

The Goſpel Church is frequently called in Scripture *the Kingdom of Heaven, and the*

the Kingdom of light; but by this course of blind Devotion and stupid Ignorance, it would become more like Hell, which they say hath heat without light.

God in the Gospel requires a *reasonable service*, and it can never be consistent that those that pretend Christ Jesus is risen upon them as a Sun of Righteousness, should think to worship this Sun by turning their backs upon him, or shutting their eyes against his light. If it were or could be so, then this Proposition would be true, That the way to become good Christians, is to cease to be Men.

2. Secondly, They direct us to an *Infallible Judge* of all Controversies. And this they so much magnifie and represent as absolutely necessary to Peace, that they tell us we shall labour in vain, in the use of all other Expedients, and only roll up a weight with infinite pains, that will with the greater violence return upon us again, till we make use of this Remedy.

But it is so Mountebank-like to pretend to Infallible Cures, that we desire to be resolved of these two or three things before we can comply with the advice.

1. We

1. We would fain know how it came to pass, that so important a point as this is (of an Infallible Judge of Controversies) which it is pretended would secure the Peace of all States, preserve the Concord and the Dignity of all Churches, stop the mouths of all Atheists, prevent the Sin and the Damnation of many Souls, is no more plainly asserted in Scripture, nor proved by Reason, nor better agreed of amongst themselves, that thus recommend it? A man would reasonably expect that a business of this nature, (which is therefore of more value than any one Article of Faith, in as much as that it hereupon depends what shall be so,) should have been more clear and evident than those things that depend upon it: but contrariwise, we find that no man ever yet could perswade by Reason, that one certain man in the World was more than a man, and all the rest less.

And then for Scripture, that plainly tells us, *that all men are lyars*; *i. e.* such as may deceive, or be deceived; and most undoubtedly would never have made such a distinction of Christians, as *strong men* and *babes* in Christ, nor made it our duty to consider one anothers weakness, and practise

mutual forbearance, if it had intended any where to direct us to such an Umpire as should have ended all disputes, and made all men equally certain.

But then for agreement amongst themselves, where to lodge this Infallibility, whether in the Pope alone, or in the Pope and Consistory, or in a General Council, or in all these together, or in something else, is, for ought I see, a Question that needs an Infallible Judge to determine.

2. How comes it to pass that all Controversies are not determined and Disputes ended long ago, if this were true that is pretended?

Whether there be any Infallible Judge to resort to now, is the point in question; but it is certain there was such a thing in the Apostles times: they had the assistance of the Holy Spirit in such a manner as to guide them into all truth, and gave miraculous proofs that they had so; and yet this would not cure all the Schisms, nor resolve all Scruples, nor silence all Disputes then. And how Infallibility in a Pope or any other person, (if it were there to be found) should have better success now than it had in those more

more ſincere and ſimple times of Chriſtianity, I think is not very reaſonably expected.

Beſides, We find manifeſtly that thoſe that glory ſo much of this Remedy, have not found ſuch benefit by it, as that they commend it to us for. For it is well enough known, that the *Romaniſts* have their Diſputes as well as we; The *Franciſcans* againſt the *Dominicans*, and the *Janſeniſts* againſt the *Moliniſts*, and their ſeveral Perſwaſions managed with as much heat as any of our Controverſies; ſaving that indeed they all agree in *uno tertio* the Supremacy of the Pope. Therefore we ſay, *Medice cura teipſum.* Let us ſee all their own Difficulties decided and Diſputes ended, and then, and to be ſure not till then, ſhall we be encouraged to make uſe of the Remedy.

3. Thirdly, They have another Remedy which I muſt needs confeſs hath done ſtrange things and been very ſucceſsful amongſt themſelves, and I will tranſcribe the Receipt of it out of an ingenious Book called *Europæ ſpeculum*, *pag.* 34. of the Edition at the *Hague*, 1629. in theſe words: *The particular wayes they hold to raviſh all affections and fit each humour, are well nigh infinite;*

there being not any thing either ſacred or prophane, no virtue nor vice almoſt, nothing of how contrary condition ſoever, which they make not in ſome ſort to ſerve that turn, that each phancy may be ſatisfied. Whatever wealth can ſway with the lovers, or voluntary poverty with the deſpiſers of the world; what honour with the ambitious, what obedience with the humble; what great employment with ſtirring and active ſpirits, what perpetual quiet with heavy and reſtive bodies; what content the pleaſant nature can take in paſtimes and jollity, what contrariwiſe the auſtere mind in diſcipline and rigour; what love either chaſtity can raiſe in the pure, or voluptuouſneſs in the diſſolute, &c. What change of vows with the raſh, or of eſtate with the unconſtant; what pardons with the faulty, or ſupplyes with the defective; what miracles with the credulous, or viſions with the phantaſtical; what gorgeouſneſs of ſhews with the vulgar and ſimple, what multitude of Ceremonies with the ſuperſtitious, what prayers with the devout; And in ſumm, whatſoever can prevail with any man, either for himſelf to purſue, or to love and reverence in another, the ſame is found with them.——On the one ſide of the ſtreet a Cloyſter of Virgins, on the other a Stye of Courtezans, with publick

lick toleration. This day all in Masks with looſneſs and foolery, to morrow all in Proceſſions, whipping themſelves till the blood follow. To conclude, Never State, never Government in the world, ſo ſtrangely compacted of infinite contrarieties, all tending to the entertainment of the ſeveral humours of men.

Now no wonder that this courſe ſhould keep them generally contented, ſince it is in effect an univerſal Toleration, a permitting men to be and do what they liſt, ſo they caſt but ſome garb of Religion or other over it.

In the *United Provinces*, it is commonly ſaid, There is an allowance of all Opinions; but the truth is no more but this, That that State being made up of a combination of ſeveral Free Cities, he that finds not his Opinion countenanced in one City ſo much as he deſires, may retire to another where it is publickly profeſt. So in the Church of *Rome*, he that likes not the debaucheries of the Court, may enjoy ſeverities in a Monaſtery, he that is offended with one Order, may make choice of another; a man may be a *good Catholick* as they call it, without

being a *good Christian*; he may perfectly accommodate his own humour, if he have but the wit to make a right choice for himself; he need not be at the Self-denyal to conform his humour to his Profession, but may fit his inclination with a way of Religion, if he have not prevented himself by an imprudent election. He may almost do any thing, provided, as *Erasmus* observes, *He let but two things alone, which are the only dangerous points, that is to say, that he meddle not with the Popes Crown, nor the Monks Bellies.*

But we of this Church are not of opinion, that such a Tenet as this is, is worth the prostitution of Religion, and the debauching of mens minds and Consciences; and have too much simplicity and sincerity of Devotion, to make use of this Remedy, to put an end to our Distractions.

4. Fourthly, But the great and infallible Remedy is yet to come, and is that which others express by several words, *Axes, Halters, Racks, Fire* and *Faggot*; but they by one word that signifies as much as all those, *viz. the Holy Inquisition.* This is that Engine that stretches all mens Intellectuals to the proportion of the Priests, or cuts them off

to

to the publick Standard; this decides all Controverſies, ſilences all Diſputes, reſolves all Scruples, and makes perfect Peace where-ever it comes. But,

Though we grant all this, yet will not this down with *Engliſhmen*. For beſides that our Goſpel is not like (what they ſay of) the Laws of *Draco*, *written in blood*, nor have we any Rubrick, to kill men *for quietneſs ſake*; beſides this, I ſay, the Genius of this Nation is both too couragious and too compaſſionate, to be this way Governed.

No people in the world are leſs moved by the apprehenſion of death and danger than they, and no people are more tender of the Lives of others than they. For generally theſe two Virtues are inſeparable, and the moſt generous tempers are commonly the moſt merciful. The *Engliſh* will be led like Men, but not driven like Beaſts. They have great minds that will be moved by example, and wrought upon by kindneſs, and melted by good nature; but will ſooner ſuffer themſelves to be broken in pieces, than that cruelty ſhall force them, or fear and danger prevail over them.

It is generally obſervable here, that no Laws ſo ſoon grow in deſuetude, and are rendered unpracticable, as thoſe that are too ſevere. It is counted a butcherly way of Chirurgerie with us, for every ſlight wound to cut off the member. And the exerciſe of ſo much Cruelty upon the account of Religion, by thoſe Blood-letters in Queen *Maries* time, hath (thanks be to God) made that Profeſſion deteſtable to this day; and it looked ſo ill in the *Romaniſts*, that we ſhall never be perſwaded to practiſe it our ſelves.

Therefore none of the *Romaniſts* Expedients will work the Cure we deſire in this Church.

Let us ſee then what other courſes there are to be taken, and there remain yet theſe three to be conſidered of. 1. *Univerſal Toleration.* 2. *Comprehenſion.* 3. *Inſtruction and Conſideration.*

1. *Univerſal Toleration.* This is highly commended by ſome as the moſt Chriſtian Remedy, *to let all grow together till the harveſt.* We are told, "That it was it "made

" made the Primitive Church so happy, and " we may observe that this the Christians " pleaded for under persecuting Emperours, " affirming, *That it was every mans natu-* " *ral right to serve what God, and use what* " *Religion he thought good.* This the Great " *Constantine* declared at his first entrance " upon the Empire, and they say that every " Prince is bound to do so too. Besides, it " is affirmed, that this is the best way of " propagating Truth and giving it Reputa- " tion, and making its Triumphs conspicu- " ous, by setting it upon even ground, and " giving it no advantage in the encounter of " Error. And that the minds of men will " be as open to truth as falshood, when they " are delivered from the prejudice. That it " is Power and Interest make men of such " or such Opinions. That this is the only " way to make a Learned Clergy, when they " shall have a necessity upon them to be able " to prove substantially whatever they ex- " pect should be received; and in fine, That " the only way to make peaceable Subjects, " a rich Countrey and a happy Prince is to " open a Pantheon, to give Liberty to all " Religions.

But

But two things would be conſidered of in this point.

Firſt, That whatſoever fine things are ſaid of this or whatever collateral advantage may be reaped by it, they are of no other force, than to incline the Magiſtrate prudentially in ſome caſes to uſe Indulgence; for it never was nor will be proved, that it is the expreſs duty of a Chriſtian Magiſtrate to tolerate all Opinions whatſoever; for ſome are ſuch as deſtroy all Religion which he is to protect, others ſubvert all Civil Societie which he is to maintain: Therefore it can never be his duty to carry an indifferent hand in Religion.

And though it be true, that the Primitive Chriſtians uſed ſuch general expreſſions as are above-ſpecified, and *Conſtantine* made ſuch a declaration, yet both he and they limited and interpreted themſelves afterwards. And indeed it cannot be ſhewn *de facto* that any Government in the whole Chriſtian World doth tolerate all Opinions whatſoever. For ſhould they do ſo, it muſt be ſuppoſed, that the Magiſtrate is to have no Conſcience or Religion himſelf, that other men may have no

no check in theirs whatever it be.

2. But if it were true, that the Magiſtrate might (if he would) indulge all Sects and Opinions, and alſo were diſpoſed ſo to do; yet beſides the Inconveniencies that would follow, This very thing would be very unacceptable to the people of this Nation; amongſt whom there is ſo much ſincerity and heartineſs in Religion.

It might go down perhaps amongſt ſuch as have a great Indifferency and Lukewarmneſs in Religion, with ſuch people whoſe God is their Gain, and whoſe Religion is their Trade or Intereſt. But devout and ſerious people had rather ſuffer ſome hardſhip themſelves upon the account of their Conſciences, than buy their own quiet at the price of Gods diſhonour. And whatever kindneſs they may have to ſome diſſenters, or fondneſs to ſome by-path themſelves, yet rather than open ſo wide a Gap as that Popery and Atheiſm it ſelf ſhould enter in by it, they would deny themſelves and think it the duty of all other good Chriſtians to do ſo too.

2. *Comprehenſion*; whereby, I ſuppoſe, is meant

meant the making the terms of Communion more free and easie, an opening the arms of the Church to receive more into her bosome, thereby to enlarge both the Society and Interest of the Church. This is highly recommended by some good men as the most proper expedient for a Protestant Church in our condition, as by means whereof it may be both better strengthened and secured against its Enemies abroad, and enjoy Peace and Contentment at home.

And truly for my part, if such a course please our Governours, I have no mind to oppose any thing to it; but only I desire it may be considered, that there are many things that look very probably in the general notion and speculation, and that would flatter one into a great opinion of them, and expectation from them, which when they come to be tryed, they are no wayes answerable to. Many difficulties occurr in the reducing things of this nature to practice that were not foreseen in the theory, and nothing more common, than for mens minds to deceive them, or their constancy to fail them, so as that they shall take no great pleasure in the enjoyment of that which they languisht with desire of, whilest it was sweetned to them by

by the poinant ſauces of hope and fear. Beſides, this is not yet done, nor do we know when it will be ſet about, and it's pity the wounds of the Church ſhould bleed ſo long as till that can be effected, eſpecially if there be any Balm in *Gilead*, any way of binding them up in the mean time. And there ſeems to me to remain no other but that of the *third* Conſideration, which is the courſe I have pitched upon to recommend in the following Chapters.

By which I mean nothing elſe but an Endeavour of better informing the minds of men, in the nature of thoſe things which are the matter of our diſputes, and occaſions of our diſturbances, together with the unhappy conſequences of ſin and danger in perſevering in our preſent caſe.

Which if it can be done, we may hope to ſee the Church recover its antient felicity and peace, and ſhall not need for cure of our diſtempers, to reſort either to ſuch ſeverities as are abhorrent to all *Engliſhmen*, or to ſuch arts as deform Chriſtianity in general, or to be alwayes changing and altering to the great diſhonour of Proteſtant Religion in

in particular. And this I do not despair may be obtained, if those Protestants of this Church and Kingdom that at present differ from the Church in some particulars, will impartially consider the following Propositions.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the true notion of Schiſm, the ſin and miſchievous conſequents of it.

THough the Will of man deſervedly bear the blame of his miſcarriages, as being neither under Fatal neceſſity, nor ſubject to violence and compulſion, but that it may ſuſpend its own act till it be rightly informed; yet I have ſo much charity to humane nature, as to think that moſt of its irregularities proceed not meerly from ſtubborn perverſion, but miſtake of the object. And that therefore Mankind is very pittyable in its errors, having not that clearneſs of perception, nor preſence of mind that higher and more immaterial Spirits have.

And perhaps upon this account, it pleaſed the Divine Goodneſs to afford men that which he denyed to the fallen Angels, *ſecundam tabulam poſtnaufragium*, and to open

open to them a door of hope by repentance and retrival of their faults. And accordingly I obſerve, that thoſe that cruelly murdered our Saviour, he prayes for them in this form, *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*

And that it was not only the ſilly multitude that was ſo overſeen, but alſo the wiſeſt of his Perſecutors, St. *Peter* bears witneſs, Acts 3. 17. *I wot that ye did it ignorantly, as alſo did your Rulers.* So that I am neither deſtitute of reaſon nor example for my charity, if I think in the preſent caſe, concerning the greateſt part of thoſe that are guilty of the diſtractions of this Church, that did they rightly underſtand the nature of *Schiſm* and wherein it conſiſts, or the guilt and michiefs that attend it, they would eaſily be induced to change their courſe. This therefore I ſhall firſt offer to conſideration.

Touching the ſin of dividing the Church, that it is of the deepeſt dye and greateſt guilt, I ſuppoſe we ſhall eaſily agree; for indeed no body can well doubt of that, who conſiders what care our Saviour took to prevent it, what pains he took with his Apoſtles, that they might be throughly inſtructed, and not differ in the delivery of his mind

mind to the world, and with what extraordinary ardour he prayed for them upon this very account, *John* 17. 11.

And the Apostles themselves answered their Masters care with their own diligence and circumspection. He that observes how industrious they were to resist all beginnings of Schism in every Church, to heal all breaches, to take away all occasions of division, to unite all hearts and reconcile all minds; How they taught people to detest this distemper as the bane of Christianity, charging them to use the greatest caution against it, to mark and avoid all those men that inclined that way, as persons of a contagious breath and infectious society; What odious names they give it, as *Carnality, the work of the flesh and of the Devil*: He, I say, that observes all this, cannot but be apprehensive of the greatness of this sin. 1 Cor. 3. 4.

But he that shall trace the sense of the Church a little farther, will find the Primitive Christians hating it in such detestation, that they thought it equal to the most notorious sins, Idolatry, Murder and Sacriledge.

St. *Cyprian* amongst the rest affirms it to be of so horrible a guilt, that *Martyrdom was not a sufficient expiation of it*; that *to dye* *De unitate Eccles.*

for Christ the Head, would not wash out the stain of having divided the Church his Body.

And all this was no more than the case deserved, for had the Christian Church been broken into Factions and Parties in those times, as it hath been since, it is not easie to imagine, how it could have resisted the whole World that was united against it: Or if yet it could have subsisted in its several divided Parties, the mischief would have been little less; for then those of after-times would have had the several Opinions and distinct and peculiar Sentiments of those divided Parties, delivered down to them with equal heat and earnestness, so that it would have proved impossible to have distinguisht the Truth of God from the Opinions of men, and the common Faith from the *Shiboleth* and cognizances of the several Sects and Parties. And for this cause it pleased God that his Church should rather in those early dayes be harassed with persecutions, which made it unite it self the closer, and (paring off all superfluities) keep to the necessary and essential Doctrines delivered to it, than to be softened and made wanton by ease, and so to corrupt the Simplicity of the Gospel.

Nor is the importance of Unity much less

in

in these latter dayes of Christianity; forasmuch as all Divisions in all times destroy that beauty and loveliness, which would otherwise attract all mens admiration and affection. Beauty properly is nothing but order and harmony of parts; the excellency of any Fabrick consists not so much in the quality of the materials, as in the curious method they are digested into, and the good respect and correspondence one part hath with another. It is not the sublimity of Christian Doctrine, nor the gloriousness of the Hopes it propounds, that will so recommend it to the opinion and esteem of Beholders, as when it shall be said, *Ecce ut Christiani amant*, when they shall observe the love, concord and unanimity amongst the professors of it. And the want of this hardens the hearts of *Jews* and *Turks* and *Pagans* more against it, than all the reasons and proofs we can give for it, will soften them; and instead of opening their ears and hearts to entertain it, opens their mouths in contempt and blasphemy against it.

But besides the disadvantage Christianity is exposed to by its Divisions, in respect of those that are without, it suffers unspeakably within its own Territories. For who will be perswaded patiently to hear, attentively

tively to consider, or impartially to judge of the discourses of him against whom he hath an animosity? Every thing the truer it is, the more it is for its advantage to be calmly considered: and by how much of the more importance it is, by so much is he that would have his proposition successful, bound in wisdome to take care that the minds of men be not by passion and prejudice indisposed to receive it.

Livy observes, that prodigious Stories, Lyes and Fables find best entertainment in troublesome times, *quia tutius finguntur & facilius creduntur*; men are not then at leisure to consider strictly what is true and false, and so truth loses its advantage-ground, and error succeeds in it. Our Saviour therefore chose to come into the world in a time of the most profound peace, not only because such a season became the Prince of Peace, but especially for this advantage of his Doctrine we are speaking of, namely, that he might find men in calm thoughts and at leisure to consider the reasonableness of his propositions. For who can maturely weigh things when all is in hurry and tumult? Who can discern exactly the difference of things, when all is in motion? Especially who is there that is willing either to do good to, or to receive good from him, against

againſt whom he hath an exulcerate mind?

In ſhort then, and to ſpeak ſummarily, From Schiſms and Diviſions amongſt Chriſtians, comes that prejudice upon the minds of people that diſcourages the indeavours, and fruſtrates the labours of the Miniſters of Religion. From thence come all the Suſpicions, Jealouſies, Whiſperings, Backbitings and all other inſtances of Uncharitableneſs. Theſe hinder the fervour of mens Prayers, and abate the edge of their Devotions. Theſe evaporate the true Spirit and Life of Religion in impertinent Diſputes, ſo that men loſe the ſubſtance, whileſt they contend for the ſhadow. By theſe the ſinews of all Society are diſſolved; for when the Church is diſturbed, it ſeldome reſts here, but the State is concerned too; and Schiſm in the former, proves Sedition in the latter. And this conſideration is able to provoke the Magiſtrate to keep a jealous eye upon the Church and Religion.

All theſe things are ſo true in themſelves, and withal ſo generally acknowledged by all Parties, that a man might juſtly wonder, how any Chriſtian ſhould be guilty of Schiſm, which all ſo much abominate. Were it not that we may obſerve too, that ſome

have found pleaſure to get that Child, they would by no means have laid at their own door. Schiſm is ſo miſhapen as well as ill-begotten a Brat, that no body is willing to father it. It was the early proof *Solomon* gave of his wiſdom, in diſcovering the true Mother of the living Child, to which both the Litigants laid equal claim. It is a matter of no leſs importance, and ſome think of equal difficulty, to make diſcovery, who the diſtractions of the Church are juſtly to be imputed to. But as that Wiſe Prince diſcerned the true Mother by the tenderneſs of her bowels towards the Infant, ſo we perhaps may diſcover the true Children of the Church by their reſpect and tenderneſs, and conſequently the Schiſmaticks by their irreverence and unnaturalneſs towards her.

In order to which, I will therefore briefly and plainly deſcribe the true notion of *Schiſm*; In hopes that when men ſhall underſtand, wherein the guilt of it lyes, they will avoid the evil as well as abominate the conſequence.

Schiſm is a voluntary departure or ſeparation of ones ſelf without juſt cauſe given, from that Chriſtian Church whereof he was once

once a member; or, *Schiſm* is a breach of that Communion wherein a man might have continued without ſin.

Firſt, I call it a *Departure or Separation from the Society of the Church*, to diſtinguiſh it from other ſins, which though they are breaches of the Laws of our Religion, and conſequently of the Church, yet are not a renunciation of the Society. For as there may be a ſickly, infirm, nay, an ulcerous member, and yet a member of the body: So there may be ſuch a perſon, who for his wickedneſs deſerves well to be caſt out of the Church, as being a ſcandal and diſhonour to it, yet neither ſeparating himſelf, nor being caſt out of the Society, remains ſtill a member of it.

Now what it is that imports a mans ſeparation of himſelf or departure from the Church, we ſhall eaſily underſtand; for it is no more but this, When a man ſhall either expreſly declare that he doth renounce ſuch a Society, or ſhall refuſe to joyn in the acts and exerciſes of Religion uſed by ſuch a Society, and to ſubmit to its Authority. So he ſeparates that refuſes Baptiſm, the Lord Supper, or to ſubmit unto the Cenſures of a Church, and ſufficiently declares that he owns himſelf no longer of it. Se-

Secondly, I call it a *Voluntary* Separation, to distinguish sin from punishment, or Schism from Excommunication. For though the last makes a man no member of a Church, yet it is supposed involuntary, and he doth not make himself so.

Thirdly, I call it a departure from a *particular Church of Christ*, or from a *part of the visible Church*, to distinguish it from Apostasie, which is a casting off of the whole Religion, the name and profession of Christianity, and not only the particular Society: but the Schismatick is he that, retaining the Religion in general, or at least a pretence of it, changes his Society, associates himself with, or makes up some other body in opposition to that whereof he formerly was.

Fourthly, I add those words *whereof he was a member*, because Schism imports division and making two of that which was but one before. And so *Turks*, *Pagans*, *Jews* cannot be called Schismaticks, having never been of the Church.

These things I suppose are all generally agreed of; The only difficulty is in that which I subjoyn in these words, an *unne-*

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ceſſary ſeparation, or *without juſt cauſe*, or to ſeparate from that Society *wherein I may continue without ſin.* And here we meet with oppoſition on both ſides, ſome defining too ſtrictly, and others extending too far, the cauſes of Separation.

Of the firſt ſort are the Zealots of the Church of *Rome*, who ſcarcely allow any thing as a ſufficient cauſe of Separation; for being conſcious of ſo many and great Corruptions in their Church, they know they can ſcarce allow any thing as a juſt cauſe of Separation, that will not be in danger to be uſed againſt themſelves, and juſtifie the receſſion of all Proteſtants from them.

But on the other ſide, ſome Proteſtants make the cauſes of Separation as many and as light as the *Jews* did of Divorce, almoſt for any matter whatſoever. *Joſephus* put away his Wife (as himſelf tells us) becauſe ſhe was not mannerly enough; another his, becauſe he ſaw a handſomer than ſhe; a third his, becauſe ſhe dreſt not his dinner well. As theſe *Jews* did by their Wives, ſo do many Chriſtians by the Church; One likes not her dreſs, another thinks her too coſtly in her ornaments, a third phanſies ſome *German* beauty or other that he hath

ſeen

ſeen in his travails, and all (to make way for new Amours) upon very ſlender pretences repudiate their former choice. But as our Saviour when the Caſe was put, found out a middle way betwixt allowing Divorce for no cauſe at all, and for every cauſe; ſo ought it to be done in this buſineſs of Schiſm.

To hit this mark therefore, I ſay, that then, and then only, is there juſt cauſe of Separation, when Perſeverance in the Communion of ſuch a Church cannot be without ſin; that is, when ſhe ſhall impoſe ſuch Laws and terms of Society, as cannot be ſubmitted to without apparent breach of the Divine Law.

And upon this foundation, I doubt not but we ſhall quit our ſelves well on both ſides; that is, both juſtifie our Receſſion from the Church of *Rome*, and demonſtrate the unwarrantableneſs of the Separation of the Proteſtants of this Kingdom from the Communion of the Church of *England*. For it's plain on the one hand, that it cannot be ſin to ſeparate, when it is ſin to communicate, ſince no Laws of men can abrogate or diſſolve the obligation of the expreſs Laws of God. And on the other it is as plain, that Schiſm being ſo great a ſin, and of ſo extream

tream bad consequence, that which must acquit me of the guilt of it in my separation, can be nothing less than equal danger on the other hand, and that when I may persevere without sin, it must of necessity be a sin to separate upon inferiour dislikes.

This methinks is so plain, that I wonder any doubt should be admitted of in the case. Notwithstanding because I observe some men think to wash their hands of the imputation of Schism upon other terms; as namely, Although a Church shall not require or impose such conditions of Communion as are expresly sinful, yet if she shall require indifferent unnecessary, or at most suspected things; that in this case there is enough to excuse the person that shall separate, from a participation of this sin. And also because this opinion bears it self up by the great name of Mr. *Hales*, as his declared judgement in a little Tract of *Schism* now very much in the hands of men, I will therefore for the clearing of this matter say these three things.

1. I willingly acknowledge, that such a Church as shall studiously or carelesly clog her Communion with unnecessary, burdensome and suspected conditions, is very highly to blame; yet is it neither burdensomness nor

nor every light ſuſpicion of ſin, but a plain neceſſity or certainty of ſin in complyance, that can juſtifie my Separation; foraſmuch as I cannot be diſcharged from a plain duty, but by an equal plainneſs of the ſin. And for this phraſe *ſuſpected*, it is ſo looſe and uncertain, that there is no hold of it; men will eaſily ſuſpect what they have no mind to: and Suſpicion having this priviledge, we ſhall quickly evacute every uneaſie duty, and inſtead of guiding our ſelves by Gods Word and ſound reaſoning, we ſhall give our ſelves up to the conduct of Paſſion, Melancholy and Secular Intereſt.

2. If the non-neceſſity of ſome of the terms of Communion be a warrant of ſeparation, then there can be no ſuch ſin as Schiſm at all, foraſmuch as there never was, nor probably ever will be, ſuch a Church as required nothing of thoſe in her Communion, but things ſtrictly and abſolutely neceſſary; as I have ſhewed partly in the Introduction, and could eaſily make appear at large through all Ages. And then may the Author of the Tract about *Schiſm* ſecurely, as he doth ſomewhat too lightly, call it only a Theological Scarcrow.

3. It will be manifeſt to any conſidering perſon,

person, that some things are necessary to the Constitution and Administration of a particular Church, that are not in themselves necessary absolutely considered. And of this I will give two instances.

The first in the Apostles times; The *abstaining from things strangled and blood*, was by the Council at *Jerusalem* adjudged and declared necessary to be observed by the *Gentiles* in order to an accommodation betwixt them and the *Jews* (of which I shall say more hereafter) and yet I suppose scarce any body thinks the observation of that abstinence so enjoyned, necessary in it self.

The second instance shall be *Church-Government*. Whatever disputes there are about the several Forms of it, as whether it ought to be Monarchical or Aristocratical, Episcopal or Consistorial, and whatever zeal for opinion may transport men to say in favour of either of them, yet I suppose few or none will affirm, that either of these Forms is absolutely necessary; for if one be of absolute necessity, the other must be absolutely unlawful: and not only so, but then also those that do not receive that absolutely necessary Form, can be no Churches, for that Society which is defective in absolutely necessaries, can

can be no Christian Church. Notwithstanding it is not only lawful to determine and define this unnecessary point, but it is necessary to the constitution of every particular Church, that it be defined one way or other, I mean so far as concerns that Church; for if this be left indifferent in this particular Church (as perhaps it is in it self in the general) it is manifest there can be no Superiour nor Inferiour, no Governour nor governed, no Order, and consequently a meer Rout and no Church. Therefore some things not necessary in themselves not only may, but must be defined in a particular Church; and consequently it will be no just exception against a Church, nor excuse from Schism, if we separate from that Communion, because such definitions are made in it.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the nature and importance of thoſe things that are ſcrupled, or objected againſt in this Church; and that they are ſuch as may without ſin be ſacrificed to Peace, and therefore cannot excuſe us from ſin in ſeparating from the Church upon their account.

IT is the cuſtome of thoſe that have a mind to quarrel, to aggravate and heighten the cauſes of diſcontent, to the end that the enſuing miſchief may not be imputed to the frowardneſs of their temper, but to the greatneſs of the provocation. And paſſion is ſuch a Magnifying-glaſs as is able to extend a Mole-hill to a Mountain. The way of Peace therefore is to take juſt meaſures of things; and as upon the account of Truth we muſt not make the matters of our diſpute leſs than they are, ſo for the ſake of both Truth and Peace we ought not to make them greater. Wherefore if men would be perſwaded to

ſet

ſet aſide paſſion, and calmly conſider the nature and juſt value of thoſe things that we in this Church are divided upon, we ſhould then be ſo far from ſeeing reaſon to perpetuate our diſtance and animoſities, that we ſhould on the contrary, be ſeized with wonder and indignation, that we have hitherto been impoſed upon ſo far, as to take thoſe things for great deformities, which upon mature conſideration are really nothing worſe than Moles, which may be upon the moſt beautiful face.

To this purpoſe therefore, having in the former Chapter repreſented the nature of Schiſm, and the guilt and miſchiefs attending it, I proceed now to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of the temptations to it, I mean the littleneſs and ſmall importance of the Objections againſt this Church; and that neither any of them ſingle, nor all of them together can countervail the bleſſing of Peace or the evil of Diviſion.

In order hereto, I will firſt ſhew that the cauſes of Diſſenſions amongſt us are not like thoſe upon which we ſeparated from the *Roman* Communion. 2. That ſomething muſt be given for Peace by them that will have it. 3. That all the ſcruples and objections againſt

againſt this Church, are not too great a price to pay for it.

1. Touching the firſt, it is ſaid by ſome in heat and paſſion; That there is as much cauſe for ſeceſſion from this Church now, as there was from the *Roman* in the time of our Anceſtors: but with no more reaſon, than if the arguments and diſcourſes written againſt a notorious Tyrant and Uſurper, ſhould be turned againſt a good and lawful Prince. As will eaſily be manifeſt if we conſider the juſt ſtate of the caſe on either hand.

We could not continue in the *Roman* Church upon any better conditions than *Nahaſh* propounded to the men of *Jabeſh Gilead*, 1 *Sam.* 11. to put out our right Eyes that we might be fit for her blind devotion. We muſt for the ſake of Peace have denyed the Faith, renounced our Reaſon, and contradicted our very Senſes. That Church inſtead of inſtructing men in knowledge, profeſſes to nurſe them up in ignorance; in lieu of the Scriptures, it gives them Traditions, and inſtead of ſuch things as were *from the beginning*, and the *faith once delivered to the Saints*, it preſcribes thoſe things that had their

beginning from private intereſts and ſecular advantages.

They make ſeven Secraments, five more than Chriſt ever intended for ſuch, and take away from the people the half of one of thoſe he expreſly inſtituted and enjoyned. They teach men to pray to Saints inſtead of God, and to uſe a Language in their Devotions which he that pronounces, underſtands no more than the Saint, he prayes to, doth his Needs and Requeſts. Nay, they give divine honour to a piece of Bread, and muſt ſwallow Idolatry in ſpite of their teeth; herein little better than the *Ægyptians* who worſhipt that for a God which they put into their Bellies. They have taken away one of the Ten Commandments and have arts of evacuating all the reſt, for they elude the neceſſity of a true and ſerious Repentance, and ſubvert the principles of holy Life. In ſhort, they have brought in Pageantry inſtead of Piety and Devotion, effaced the true lineaments of Chriſtianity, and inſtead thereof recommended and obtruded upon the world the dictates of Ambition, the artifices of Gain, and a colluvies of almoſt all the Superſtitions, Errors and Corruptions of former Ages, and this muſt be received and

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swallowed by all those that will continue in that Communion.

These things could not be submitted to without grievous Sin and manifest danger of Damnation; therefore there was just ground for our Recession: for, as I said, it could not be sin to depart when it was so to continue. And it is a very reasonable choice rather to be condemned by them of Singularity, than to be damned for Company.

But now it is quite otherwise in the Church of *England*. No man here parts with his Faith upon his Conformity, no man is bound to give away his Reason and common Sense for quietness sake. No man needs to hazard the Peace of a good and well instructed Conscience, for the Peace of the Church. No man is tempted to renounce his Integrity, but may be as good and holy a man as he will, and the more of that the better Church-man. This Church keeps none of her Children in an uncomfortable estate of darkness, but teaches the true knowledge of God and Christ sincerely and very advantageously. She hath no half Communions, nor debarrs any of her members of the priviledge and comfort of Christs Institutions. She recommends the same

Faith and the ſame Scriptures that all Proteſtants are agreed in. The ſame God, and only he, is worſhipped, the ſame rules of holy Life are propounded, as well as the ſame hopes and happineſs expected.

By this brief repreſentation the difference between the Church of *Rome* and the Proteſtants, appears ſo wide and vaſt, that they agree neither in their *Creed*, nor *Object of Worſhip*, nor *Sacraments*, nor *Rules of Life*. On the other ſide, the agreements of Proteſtants with the Church of *England* is ſo full and perfect, that they have not only the *ſame God and Chriſt*, but the *ſame object of Worſhip*, the *ſame way of Devotion* in a known Tongue, the *ſame Sacraments* and *ſame rule of life*, which certainly are all the great things that the Conſciences of men are concerned in.

A man might therefore juſtly wonder, (theſe things being ſo) what ſhould make a breach, and what place there is for contention; or what can remain conſiderable enough to occaſion the diſſatisfaction, to provoke the animoſity, to countenance that diſtance that is between us. And I verily believe it would be hard for a ſtranger to this Church and Nation, that underſtood the ſtate of the caſe thus

thus far, to gueſs what ſhould be the bone of contention amongſt us.

I will now as well as I can both faithfully and briefly recite the matters of difference. And I muſt needs confeſs, if we *number* them only, they are many; But if we *weigh* them (not only againſt the things we are agreed in, but againſt peace and agreement it ſelf) I perſwade my ſelf they will be very light. But that I muſt leave to the judgement of the Reader. The things themſelves are theſe and ſuch as theſe.

Whether ſuch Prayers ſhall make up the body of the publick Liturgy, as have been conceived by the Governours of the Church, and uſed ever ſince the Reformation; or ſuch as ſhall *pro re nata* be occaſionally indited by every private Miniſter?

Or, which perhaps is much the ſame, whether ſuch words, expreſſions and phraſes ſhall be continued in the publick Service, as are by long uſe grown familiar to, and intelligible by vulgar people, or ſuch ſhall come in their room, as are more modern and grateful to nicer Ears?

About the ſeveral poſtures of Standing,

Kneeling and Sitting; and whether ſome one of theſe be more decorous and accommodate to ſome part of Gods Worſhip than another, and which to which?

About obſervation of Dayes and Times; as whether the Anniverſaries of the Birth, Death and Reſurrection of our Saviour and other great paſſages of the Goſpel be of uſe, and fit to be obſerved? And whether ſome ſpecial Time of Abſtinence and Mortification in conformity to the Primitive Church, may now be retained or not?

About Habits and Garments, ſuch as Gown, Surplice, *&c.* whether the habit uſed in miniſtration in the time of King *Edward*, be not now as lawful as any other?

About the Ceremony of the Croſs in Baptiſm, whether (whileſt it is declared not eſſential to Baptiſm) it may not upon other conſiderations be uſed in that Sacrament?

Or laſtly (which I think is as important as any of the reſt) whether Subordinacy of the Clergy in the Epiſcopal way, or Co-ordinacy and Parity in the Presbyterian, be rather to be preferred?

Moſt

Moſt of the Diſputes we have amongſt us, are either upon theſe queſtions, or reducible to theſe, or at leaſt of like nature with theſe. Now how inconſiderable theſe things are in themſelves, and how fit to be made a Sacrifice to Peace, I forbear to ſay, till I have in the ſecond place ſhewn, as I promiſed, that ſomething muſt be forgone for it.

2. It was a worthy and memorable ſaying of *Eraſmus*, *Mihi ſanè adeò inviſa eſt diſcordia, ut veritas etiam diſpliceat ſeditioſa.* He did not only ſuſpect that Propoſition was not true, that was not alſo peaceable, but he thought Peace not too dear at the price of ſome Truth. And he that pretends ſo high a value for the latter, as to have no eſteem for the former, neither underſtands the one nor the other.

Greg. Nazianz. puts this Queſtion, τί τοῦ ἡμετέρου λόγου κάλλιστον; and anſwers, εἰρήνη, προσθήσω δὲ ὅτι καὶ λυσιτελέστατον, That peace is not only the moſt beautiful flower in the Garden of Chriſtianity, but alſo the moſt ſoveraign and uſeful. Though it be commonly dealt with as ſome famed beauty, admired and courted, but not eſpouſed.

The Apoſtle, when *Rom.* 12. 18. he ſo paſſionately exhorts, *If it be poſſible, and as far as in you lyes, have peace with all men*, ſurely did not mean, that we ſhould only accept of Peace when it is offered us for nothing, or be quiet till we can pick a quarrel; but that we ſhould be at ſome coſt to purchaſe it, and part with ſomething for it, and deny our ſelves ſomething which (but upon that account) we might lawfully have enjoyed.

It is true we may buy Gold too dear, and ſo we muſt have done our Peace, if we ſought it at the hands of thoſe Huckſters of the Church of *Rome*, as I ſhewed before. But that we cannot reaſonably expect it for nothing in any Society in the World, I think is demonſtratively evident by this one conſideration, That there are ſcarcely any intellectual *Menæchmi*, I mean hardly any two perſons perfectly of the ſame apprehenſion or ſtature of underſtanding in the whole world. So much difference there is in mens Conſtitutions, ſuch diverſity of Education, ſuch variety of Intereſts and Cuſtoms, and from hence ſo many kinds of Prejudices and various Conceptions of things, that he that reſolves to yield to no body, can agree with

no body, and conſequently cannot be happy in any Church or Society on this ſide of Heaven. There indeed ſome think mens minds ſhall be all of one capacity, but whatever be the truth in that particular, I much doubt, whether thoſe perſons will ever make up that ſociety of the Church Triumphant, that think themſelves bound to diſturb the ſtate of the Church Militant, unleſs all things fall in with their own humour. For every peaceable man ſees he muſt either go out of the world, or ſet it all in flames, if he will not ſubdue his own paſſion, and caſtigate his heat; That he muſt ſuffer ſhipwrack in the tempeſtuous Seas of diſpute and contentions, if he will not, both take in his ſails, and lighten the ſhip by caſting overboard the fardles of his private phancies and opinions. He that will require all other men ſhould aſſent to what he thinks, and will conceal nothing he is perſwaded of, and yet expect to live in peace, muſt either have very little wit or extraordinary fortune. And he that will bear nothing that God hath not expreſly impoſed upon him, nor part with any thing he may lawfully keep, nor offer any Sacrifice to thoſe touchy Deities, received Cuſtome and vulgar Opinion, muſt expect often to feel the effects of their rage and power. In ſumm, he that will

ſacrifice

ſacrifice nothing to publick tranquillity, muſt be ſure to live in perpetual flames here, whatſoever become of him hereafter.

The Apoſtle was not, certainly, of this ſtubborn humour, who declares of himſelf that he *became all things to all men, that he might gain ſome. To the Jews he became as a Jew, to gain the Jews; to them that were without Law, as without Law; to them that were weak he became as weak too*, 1 Cor. 9. 20. He was now no longer a ſtarcht inflexible Phariſee, but a complaiſant Chriſtian, or as ſome perhaps would have called him, a Latitudinarian Apoſtle.

When a whole Council of the Apoſtles at *Jeruſalem*, *Acts* 15. (which is a paſſage I have often occaſion to mention, and well deſerves to be ſtudied by every peaceable Chriſtian) when I ſay they decreed that the Gentiles ſhould *abſtain from things ſtrangled and from blood*, they deprived them of a great part of their Chriſtian Liberty meerly to conciliate the Jews to them, and required that to be done for peace, that no Law of God otherwiſe required at their hands.

St. *Greg. Nazianzen* affirms of St. *Baſil* that he diſſembled the Coeſſentiality of the Holy

Holy Spirit, and delivered himſelf in ambiguous terms on that great point, leſt he ſhould offend and loſe the weak; which neither would that holy man have done, nor much leſs his eſpecial Friend and admirer have told of him, if either of them had thought it to have been too great a price for the purchaſe.

But we need no other, and can have no greater, inſtance in this caſe than our Saviour himſelf, who when he came into the world complyed with the Rites and Cuſtoms he found, and condeſcended to the very humours of that ſtubborn people amongſt whom he was; he uſed their phraſe in all his diſcourſes, he obſerved their Feaſts, he made his own inſtitutions of Baptiſm and the Lords Supper as conſonant to their Cuſtoms as it was poſſible; to the end that he might not diſturb them with Novelty, but ingratiate himſelf and his Doctrine by theſe complyances. When a certain Tribute was demanded of him, he firſt proves that he was not obliged to pay it, yet leſt he ſhould offend them, determines to pay it, and works a Miracle to make *Peter* to do it, *Mat.* 17.27.

What ſhall we ſay to all this? Are theſe Inſtances only to trace out an example of con-

condeſcenſion in Magiſtrates and Governours to their Inferiours? or are they not moſt certainly as Land-marks to all of what degree or condition ſoever to direct them how to ſteer their courſe, and behave themſelves in order to Peace?

Let me appeal to the Conſciences of men, Is it not plain from hence, that although I be perſwaded ſuch a certain Rite is leſs commendable in it ſelf, yet if it appear to be an inſtrument of Accommodation, that it is therefore in that caſe beſt upon that account? And that ſuch things as are indifferent, or have no eſſential goodneſs of their own, become not indifferent but good, as they are uſeful or neceſſary to that end? Or if I am perſwaded, that ſuch an opinion is more true than that which is publickly received (ſo long as the main Doctrine of Chriſtianity is not in diſpute) I may not for all this conceal it, rather than diſturb the Church? This was the counſel of the famous *Conſtantine* for the preventing and ſilencing diſputes at the Council of *Nice*, though the things in controverſie there, were of a higher nature than ours are. But if any man be not ſatisfied with the Judgement of ſo great and good a Prince, let him go and learn what that of St. *Paul*, Rom. 14. 22. means, *Haſt*

thou

thou faith? have it to thy ſelf, and that before God. In ſhort therefore, it will be no hypocritical tergiverſation, no wrong either to our Religion or to our Conſciences, if when the caſe ſhall ſo require, we change any phraſe of ſpeech, how fit ſoever in our apprehenſion, for one leſs fit, but more acceptable and current; any Rite or Ceremony that we have a great kindneſs for, for one more grateful to others; and that we may comply with the Laws in being, ſo they be not palpably contrary to the Scriptures or common reaſon, though we think better might be made in their room. And that according to the ſaying of the Lord *Bacon, We may take counſel of the elder times what is beſt, but of the preſent times, for what is fitteſt.* And in a word, that we part with all that which is no eſſential point of our Religion, for Charity, which is.

3. Let us now for a Concluſion of this Chapter reflect back upon the aforementioned Catalogue of things in difference, and ſee if they will not all appear to be of ſuch a nature as we have hitherto ſuppoſed them, that is, ſuch as may be fit to become a Peace-offering, and ſacrificed to the Magiſtrate, the Laws and the Church. And that we ſhall be eaſily able to reſolve of, by the help

help of theſe five following Remarques.

1. That the things now ſcrupled in this Church are ſuch as were heretofore ſubmitted to by the moſt Leading men of thoſe that now hereupon depart from it; and if thoſe things were in themſelves lawful then, they cannot change their nature by time, and become unlawful now. It will not be replyed, That then they made no conſcience of what they did, leſt it ſhould be ſuſpected they do but pretend it now; for he that confeſſes a guilt of the ſame kind, ſtrengthens the ſuſpicion of that whereof he is accuſed. But if it be ſaid, they did it Ignorantly then, and now having more light, cannot outface it: To this it will be as eaſie to anſwer, That the ingagements of Intereſt and Prejudice are as lyable to be ſuſpected now, as Ignorance heretofore; eſpecially if we conſider, that there was no appearance of any extraordinary light breaking in, when our troubles and diviſions broke out, but as ſoon as opportunity offered, and occaſion invited, that is, when Laws were laid aſleep, and Authority taken up with other cares, then preſently without further deliberation, all theſe objections ſtart up, and new Models ſet up for themſelves, which if they had been the effect of light and knowledge muſt have proceeded

ceeded gradually in proportion to that, and increaſed by time and deliberation; but this is ſo far from being the caſe, that it is ſcarce (if at all) poſſible to find any objection that is not much elder than he that makes it.

2. Thanks be to God, ſome Non-conformiſts daily come over to the Church, and thoſe not of the meaneſt Character for ability or piety; but let them bragg of any one if they can find him, that hath ſince the reſetlement of the Church at His Majeſties Reſtauration apoſtatized to them.

Now they muſt be horribly uncharitable that can conclude, either all thoſe that continue in the Church Ignorant, or thoſe that return to it Hypocritical; and if they do not judge ſo, they confeſs the matters in difference to be not certainly evil, but that prejudice hath made them ſeem ſo.

3. That there are men of as clear Underſtanding, as good Life and as comfortable Conſciences in the Society of this Church as are any where elſe to be found; and if ſo (which Impudence it ſelf hath not the face to deny) then there is no capital error in its conſtitution, ſince thoſe three anſwer to the whole deſign of Chriſtianity; and it can never be,

be, that there ſhould be danger that neither troubles the Conſcience with fears, nor diſplayes it ſelf in a bad Life, nor is diſcoverable by an honeſt heart and ſound underſtanding.

4. The things objected againſt this Church are but at moſt diſputable matters, becauſe all wiſe and good men are not agreed upon them. But that which is *ſub judice*, and yet under diſpute, cannot be called *Evil* till the diſpute is ended, and the deciſion made againſt it.

5. And laſtly, the things ſcrupled in this Church, are ſuch as the like may be found and complained of in any Church of the whole world, at leaſt ſince the Apoſtles times.

Now if theſe things be true, as I am confident they will appear upon impartial conſideration, then are the matters of our difference ſuch as I have ſuppoſed, namely, of no greater value, than that we may forgo our private opinion, phancy and cuſtome in and concerning them, for the Peace of the Church. And if we reſolve not to unite our ſelves to the Church whileſt there is any thing of this nature to diſcontent us, it is too much to be feared that Peace will for ever be hid from our eyes. But to prevent that, let me here

prevent

prevent my self in one thing that will fall in more opportunely hereafter, *viz.* That since there is no grand matter of Religion concerned in the Controversies between us, nor any violation of the Laws of God in our complying with the Laws of this Society, and since either *Mahomet* must go the Mountain, or the Mountain must come to *Mahomet*, *i. e.* one side or other must yield, we will be perswaded to think it reasonable, that the Subject should submit to the Governour, and Opinion give place to antient Custome, and Novelty to the Laws in being.

CHAP. IV.

That those that find fault with the Constitution of this Church, will never be able to find out or agree upon a better.

IT was seasonable advice which a Member of the Long Parliament is said to have propounded then when all were for pulling down, and Desolation was called Reformation; *That they should do well to let the old Building stand till they had Materials in readiness, and were agreed upon a model of a Fabrick to be set up in the stead of what they destroyed.* And not unlike was the Gloss of the Lord *Bacon* upon the words of the Prophet *Jeremy*, Chap. 6. 16. *Stand upon the wayes and inquire for the good way*, &c. that is, saith he, *Inquire for a better way, but stand upon the old wayes till you have discovered it.* And agreeably Mr. *Selden*, *Accuratius circumspiciendæ viæ omnes, de semitis antiquis consulendum, quæ vero sit optima seligenda.* And these sayings are not more

more valuable for their weight or elegancy, nor for the reputation of their Authors, than conſiderable in our caſe. We confeſs generally the old way of the Church of *England* to be right for the main, but certain Circumſtantials are uneaſie to ſome of us, and they, till thoſe are redreſt, will proceed no further. But it's reaſonable then we ſhould be able to agree upon and produce a better Model, leſt inſtead of having a new Church, we have no Church at all.

For, Firſt, It can never be thought by wiſe men that ſuch a Society as a Church, can be conſerved without ſome Rites or other, foraſmuch as no petty Corporation or Company can; nor that God can be worſhipped without all Circumſtance, at leaſt by men, that have Bodies, and are bound *to glorifie him with their Bodies as well as Souls.*

2. It is as plain, that neither any Society can continue, or any publick Worſhip be performed, if all Ceremonies and circumſtances, ſuch as of time, place, perſons and the like, be left indefinite and undetermined; for who ſhall know whom to obey, whom to hear, where to aſſemble, or where to meet, if theſe be not defined?

2. If therefore there must be some determination in Circumstantials, it must be made either by God or Man; And whether God hath made any such determination in the case we will now consider; and the rather because this is made a popular Theme to declaim upon against the Church, and *jus divinum* is boldly instamped upon those Models that have been designed to supplant it.

Indeed in the Old Testament, so far as concerned the Temple at *Jerusalem* and the Worship there to be performed, God was very particular in his directions. And we (blind as we are) may discern plain reason for so doing; because both the one and the other, I mean the Temple and the Worship to be performed thereat, were Mystical and Figurative, and designed by Typical representations to lead that people into some apprehension of those things that were not then plainly revealed, but were afterwards to be exhibited in the times of the Gospel. Now if it had been lawful for the *Jews* to have innovated or made alterations in those things whereof they understood not the reasons, they must of necessity have mis-guided themselves, and God had lost the principal end of those institutions. For since (as I said)

said) they had no sufficient and clear knowledge of the things typified, the change in the Rites, (which people (so in the dark) were likely to make,) must of necessity have led them further beside the mark God aimed at; as a Copy the more removes it is from the Original draught, is likely to have less of the Life: and so the effect would have been, that by those alterations they would not have left themselves so much as the shadow to guide them to the knowledge of the substance or body.

But in their Synagogue Worship it is very observable, that they had no such limits set them, nor no such punctual directions given them by Divine Revelation, but were wholly Governed by Prudence and the general reasons of Religion, insomuch that neither the very building of Synagogues, nor any part of the Worship there performed, had any Divine Law concerning it, in all the Old Testament: nor indeed was it needful there should, here being nothing Symbolical (as in the former) but natural Religion, which the notions they had of God, and the common sense of Mankind was sufficient to guide them in. Or at least, if those common Rules should fall short in any respect, yet by any error of that kind, they could not de-

prive themſelves of any farther advantage or diſcovery God intended them, as in the Temple worſhip they might.

Now thus it is in the Goſpel; The Chriſtian Religion being a plain, eaſie, intelligible and rational way of ſerving God, it was not neceſſary that our Saviour or his Apoſtles ſhould curiouſly order, or minutely deſcribe what Rites and Circumſtances ſhould be uſed in it, but might ſafely enough leave thoſe to prudence and expediency; the general reaſon of ſo plain and natural a Religion, being ſufficient to ſecure the Church againſt any capital miſtake. And therefore he that reads the Goſpel without coloured Spectacles, will find that our Saviour made it his buſineſs to expound the Law, to vindicate it from the corrupt gloſſes of the *Jews*, to preſcribe men the Rules of true Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, to raiſe them to a noble and generous pitch, and ſet them an excellent Copy of the Divine Life, and to encourage their endeavours after it, by revealing and demonſtrating the Judgement to come, and the rewards in another world; and never went about the compoſure of Laws either of Civil or Eccleſiaſtical Policy. And for his Apoſtles, they preached the Goſpel of the Kingdom, and gave certain directions ſuited

ſuited to the conditions of the times and places and people reſpectively, but never compoſed a ſtanding Ritual for all after-times; which will be put beyond all diſpute by this one Obſervation, That ſeveral things inſtituted by the Apoſtles in the Primitive Churches, and given in command in their Sacred Writings, their Epiſtles, were intended and ſo conſtrued to be obliging only ſo long as circumſtances ſhould ſtand as then they did, and no longer. Of this nature were the *Feaſts of Love*, *the Holy Kiſs*, *the Order of Deaconeſſes*; which things with ſeveral other are no where, that I know of, now obſerved, nor is any man ſcrupled about the abrogation of them. Which is a plain evidence, that the generality of Chriſtians (where paſſion and prejudice do not miſ-guide them) acknowledge it to have been no deſign of the Apoſtles to have ſtrictly obliged men to a certain form of Rituals.

But beſides all this, the Religion God inſtituted amongſt the *Jews*, was only fitted to that people, and appropriate to that place and Countrey, and intended to oblige no body elſe. It was contrived on purpoſe to diſtinguiſh them from all other people in the world, and therefore is called by the Apoſtle *the middle wall of partition*,

Eph. 2. 14. And to the end that such separation and distance might last, the boundaries of their Rituals must be immoveable. But the Christian Religion was to throw down all Inclosures, to unite all the world under one Head, and make of all Nations one people, and therefore must be left with that freedome as to Circumstantials, as that all Nations, notwithstanding their several Limits, divers Customs and Forms of Government, might be capable of receiving it. For as our Saviour tells us, *his Kingdom was not of this world*, so he never intended that his Religion should alter the Bounds, or change the Customes, or disturb the Governments of people; but only principle the hearts of men with true holiness and goodness, and so leave them to their distinct Policies. And indeed it was one of the singular advantages of the Christian Religion, and that which made it fit to be the Catholick Religion (that is, of all times, Countreys and people) That the external Policy of it being undetermined, it reconciled it self to the condition and state of things where it came, as well as recommended it self to the minds of men by its reasonableness and goodness. Hereto agrees the known saying of *Optatus Millevitanus*, *Respublica non est in Ecclesia, sed Ecclesia est in Republica*, That the Church being contained

tained in the Civil Society, conforms it ſelf as to Externals, to that which contains it.

Upon all which it is exceedingly evident, That it is very unreaſonable to expect, that every Ceremony made uſe of by Chriſtians ſhould be found preſcribed in the Scripture or proved thence, and therefore thoſe that expect to find ſuch definitions in the New Teſtament, do (as they do too often in other caſes, as I have noted heretofore) bring an Old Teſtament Spirit to the writings of the New, and Jewiſh prejudices to the Chriſtian Doctrine. And thoſe that can be ſo fond as to perſwade themſelves they can find ſuch preſcriptions there, it is hard to ſay whether humour or weakneſs doth more betray it ſelf in ſuch pretence; for they catch hold of ſuch weak twigs as no body would do, but in deſperation of other help, and they plead ſuch obſcure paſſages, as it is a wonder if prejudice it ſelf can be contented with them. And in ſhort, they can as little agree amongſt *themſelves* either in the proofs or the things to be proved, as they do with *us*.

4. If then there muſt be ſome determination of Circumſtance or no Society, and God hath made no ſuch determination, what remains,

remains, but that men muſt? And then who fitter than our Governours who beſt underſtand the Civil Policy, and what will ſuit therewith, and with the cuſtoms and inclinations of the people under their Charge? And when ſuch determination is made, what ſhould hinder us from obedience and conformity thereto, eſpecially when the particulars ſo determined, (as they are not enjoyned by Scripture, ſo) are not contrary to it, or forbidden by it?

I conclude therefore, Whoſoever ſhall go about to diſturb a ſetled Order, concluded on by good and wiſe men, reverenced and admired by others, incorporated into the Laws of the Land, rivetted by Cuſtome, and that hath now given proof of it ſelf by above an hundred years experience, for the ſake of new and unpracticable Notions, ſhall little conſult the real advantage of the preſent Generation, and leſs their own reputation for diſcretion with Poſterity.

This occaſion brings to my mind, the famous Story of *Pacuvius Calavius* of *Capua*: The people were all in a rage againſt their Senate; and would needs in a hurry have them all depoſed, and have uſed other outrages to their perſons. This wiſe Plebeian

ſhuts

ſhuts up the Senators all together, and puts a Guard upon them, and then coming to the people, tells them, all was in their power now, adviſes them to determine their ſeveral fates according to their demerits one by one. This they very readily hearkened to. But as they paſt a Doom upon any one, he approves the Sentence, but before the execution perſwades them, to bethink themſelves of another and better man to be in his Room, ſince a Senate they could not be without. But here the buſineſs ſtuck, as he had foreſeen it would, the people who agreed unanimouſly againſt the old Senator, could by no means accord who ſhould ſucceed, one named this perſon and another that, but whoſoever was named by one party, was rejected by another; that in concluſion, as great a pique as they had conceived againſt the old Senate, for want of agreement in better men to fill their places, they were conſtrained to continue them in. I only make this application of the Story, That it is eaſie and obvious to find fault with things preſent, but not ſo to find better for the future. And till that can be done, 'tis neither juſt to call any thing evil that is the beſt of its kind, nor done like wiſe men, to quarrel with a Church for

for ſome infirmities which we know the worſt of by long experience, leſt thereby we come to have either none at all, or ſuch an one as may give us cauſe ſadly to repent our choice.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

That God layes very little ſtreſs upon Circumſtantials in Religion.

TO make that which we have hitherto diſcourſed the more clear and convictive, and to eaſe the minds of men of their ſcrupuloſities and ſuperſtitious fears, let it be conſidered in the next place, That even then when God Almighty did with the moſt punctuality preſcribe the Ceremonies and Circumſtantials of Religion, he never laid ſuch ſtreſs upon them, but that ſo long as the main of Religion was provided for, and the ſubſtance of his Inſtitutions obſerved, Alterations might be and were made in thoſe leſſer matters without his offence.

And if this be made appear, it will tend to beget in men better notions of God, and better meaſures of Religion, as well as diſpoſe them to Conformity to the Church of *England*. For they will have no reaſon then

to think of God as a captious Deity that watches advantages againſt his Creatures, nor make Religion a piece of nice ſcrupuloſity, and conſequently will neither *ſwallow Camels, nor ſtrain at Gnats*, but ſerve God with the generoſity of a free and a comfortable mind.

Now to this purpoſe it will not be unuſeful, to take notice of a diſtinction mentioned by *Maimonides*, "That the *Jews* acknowledge ſome things in their Law to "be *primæ intentionis*, and ſome things "*ſecundæ*; That there were ſome things "God required for themſelves, as being intrinſecally good, and that other things were "only required for the ſake of, and in order to, the former. The firſt kind that were *eſſentially good*, were alſo *abſolutely neceſſary*, and never could be otherwiſe, ſuch as we call *moral Duties*. The latter kind were of ſo indifferent a nature, as that not only they might *not have been commanded*, but alſo having been commanded, they may in ſome caſes *not be a Duty*; An inſtance whereof (though the *Jews* were a great while before they underſtood it, and ſoundly ſmarted for their Ignorance) is that Maxim they have now generally received, *Periculum vitæ diſſolvit Sabbatum*. But the

the fulleſt inſtance of the kind, is that which is remembred by Mr. *Selden* in his Book *de jure Naturali Gentium*, *lib.2.cap.*10. "That in caſe of ſickneſs a *Jew* might not "only eat ſuch meats as were otherwiſe for-"bidden, but (ſay they) for the recovery "of his health, or avoidance of any great "danger, he might break any Precept, ſave "only thoſe Three great ones againſt Idola-"try, Murder and Inceſt.

But theſe things come not home to my purpoſe, only I note them, to ſhew that that ſuperſtitious people had ſome general notice, that God did not ſo preciſely animadvert in little matters, ſo the great were minded.

That which I chooſe to inſiſt upon for the evidencing of this Obſervation, is the *Paſſe-over*, which was a great Sacrament inſtituted by God himſelf upon weighty reaſons, made a *Statute for ever throughout their generations*, *and the ſoul that obſerved it not was to be cut off from among his people*, Exod. 12. And in the eleventh verſe of that Chapter the moſt minute circumſtances are defined, amongſt other that they *ſhould eat the Paſſeover with ſtaves in their hands, ſhoos on their feet, and their loins girt*; by which expreſſions is plainly intimated (and accordingly

accordingly they understood and practised) that they should eat it in the posture of standing.

Nevertheless it is well known, that when they were come into the Land of *Canaan* to setled habitations, they eat it sitting or lying according to the usual custome of feasting in those Countreys. And this change continued all along till the times of our Saviour, without any reproof from God, and our Saviour himself conforms to them herein, and in the same posture eats the Passeover with his Disciples.

Now this is the rather observable, because whenas the posture enjoyned by God, was symbolical of the haste in which they went out of *Ægypt*, They in the change aforesaid instituted a Ceremony which was symbolical too, but quite of another matter, namely, of the rest and peace God had now given them in the good Land of *Canaan*. And all this alteration made upon prudential considerations, and the reason of the thing, without any warrant from God for their direction, or check for the change.

Let us take another Instance; Though God had so carefully described the Circumstances

ſtances of the *Temple-worſhip* (as I have ſhewed before, and the eſpecial reaſons of ſo doing) yet we find *David* diſtributing the Prieſts into Orders for the conveniency of their Miniſtration, which might have been called an Innovation in Religion: but beſides that, he inſtitutes inſtrumental Muſick to be uſed in the Worſhip of God without any Commiſſion from God (that appears). And yet this novelty alſo was ſo far from incurring any reprehenſion, that it was thenceforward conſtantly retained and made uſe of.

I might for the fuller Evidence of this notion obſerve, That though God had with great ſolemnity inſtituted *Sacrifices* as the means of propitiating his Divine Majeſty towards ſinful men, and had with great accuracy preſcribed the Laws thereof, yet he puts a great ſlight upon all of that nature, as a thing he regarded not in compariſon with the ſubſtantial points of Virtue and Obedience. Particularly, Pſal. 50. v. 8. *I will not reprove thee for thy ſacrifices*, &c. v. 14. *Offer to God the ſacrifices of righteouſneſs.* As if he had ſaid, Let me have theſe latter, and I ſhall not much complain for defect of the former. But eſpecially Micah 6. 7. *will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of Rams, or*

ten thousands of rivers of Oyl, &c. *but he hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* For a full explication of all which and several other passages of Scripture to the same purpose, that Aphorism so frequently made use of by our Saviour upon several occasions will be very considerable, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* Particularly *Matth.* 12. when the Pharisees who were mighty curious of little things, censured the Disciples of our Lord for violating the Sabbath in their rubbing the Ears of Corn as they went through the Fields and were hungry on that day, our Saviour answers, *That* David *did also break one of the Ceremonial Precepts in eating the Shewbread,* and v. 7. tells them, *If they had known what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, they would not have condemned the innocent.* Where though it be sure enough, that God did not repeal his Law of Sacrificing by enjoyning Mercy, yet it is sufficiently intimated, that God doth not only prefer Moral acts before Ceremonial, but also doth make great allowances, limitations and exceptions in the one case and not in the other. For it is as if our Saviour had said, *Had you Censorious Pharisees, understood either*

ther God or Religion as ye might and ought to have done, ye would have known that so long as there is not contumacy and contempt in the neglect of those rituals, but the extuse of a just necessity, or the rational consideration of a greater good to preponderate the omission, God doth not impute it for a sin.

And if this was the case and condition of things in the Old Testament, where God seemed so punctual in his Prescriptions, so rigorous in his Animadversions, and where the danger of erring capitally from the design of those institutions, by the least deviation from the line of Divine Revelation, was so great, as I have shewed before; Then certainly in the New Testament, where the Divine Wisdom hath expreſt far less concern for such little points, may the minds of men be secure from such superstitious fears.

But I will give one Instance out of the New Testament also. When Circumcision was abolished (the distinction betwixt *Jew* and *Gentile* being taken away) and all Believers become the children of *Abraham*) And when the Apostle St. *Paul* had vehemently declaimed against the necessity, and pro-

claimed the danger of Circumciſion, as is obvious to any one that reads his Epiſtles; yet this ſame Apoſtle, *Acts* 16. 1. circumciſes *Timothy*, to the intent that thereby he might render himſelf and his Miniſtry more acceptable to the *Jews*. In which carriage of his he hath beyond all exception demonſtrated to us, that all Ceremonial appendages are perfectly ſubordinate, and ought to yield to the deſigns of Peace, Charity and Edification, as the greater good.

I will conclude this Point with what the Apoſtle concludes his Diſcourſe about eating or not eating of meats ſacrificed to Idols, *Rom.* 14. which created as much diſpute and ſcruple amongſt weak Chriſtians then, as Ceremonies do now. *V.* 17. he ſayes, *The Kingdom of God*, that is, the Goſpel, *is not meat and drink*, that is, conſiſts not or layes little ſtreſs upon thoſe nice and perplexing matters, *but in righteouſneſs, peace and joy*: all the weight is laid upon the more ſubſtantial obſervances of a righteous and holy life, and a peaceable ſpirit and converſation. And adds a proof, v. 18. *For he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt is approved of God and accepted of men.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

That the Magistrate hath Authority to determine such Externals of Religion as are the matters of our disputes, and what deportment is due from Christians towards him.

HAving shewed in the former Chapters, That God hath neither made any exact definition of Religious Circumstances, nor is very curious about them, further than to secure the great things of Christianity; It follows, that then either those lesser must be determined by men, or not at all. It will therefore now be seasonable to inquire what Authority and Interest the Magistrate hath in this affair.

And although there want not those that Chameleon like live upon the air of vulgar applause, and get themselves a reputation of extraordinary zeal by daring to censure the actions, and asperse the persons of Magi-

ſtrates, and with ſuch perſons, he that ſhall vindicate the juſt Rights and Authority of his Superiours, ſhall hardly eſcape the reproach of flattery and time-ſerving; yet being conſcious both of the truth and importance of what I am to ſay, and of the ſincerity of my intentions in ſo doing, I will deliver my ſelf freely in theſe two points.

1. That the Magiſtrate exceeds not his Commiſſion when he interpoſes for the determination of the Circumſtantials of Religion.

2. That common Prudence, Chriſtian Charity and Humility do all require of us to preſume of the wiſdom and reaſonableneſs of ſuch his determinations. The reſult of which two things will be, that it is much more our duty peaceably to comply with and obey them.

1. The former of theſe hath been ſo fully and ſubſtantially proved by the incomparable *Hugo Grotius* in a juſt diſcourſe, and by a late eminent Divine of this Church, that it is enough to refer the Reader to them; yet becauſe ſome perſon may perhaps read theſe Papers, that will not take the pains, or hath not

not opportunity to read thoſe larger Diſcourſes (that yet would better compenſate his labour) I will therefore ſay theſe three things.

1. It is certain, the Magiſtrate had once a power in the Circumſtantials of Religion, and that in the Old Teſtament. *David* (as I have ſhewed before) altered ſome things and inſtituted others even in the Temple-ſervice it ſelf. *Hezekiah* without a Scripture for it, broke the brazen Serpent to pieces, though it was a ſymbolical Ceremony of Gods own inſtitution: but beſides this, he cauſed the Paſſeover to be kept by all *Judah* and *Iſrael* on the ſecond Moneth, though it was not according to divine inſtitution, but done by the advice of his Council upon pious and prudential conſiderations, 2 *Chron.* 30. 5. He appointed alſo the Levites to kill the Paſſeover, *v.* 17. which by Gods appointment was to have been performed by the people themſelves. And *Chap.* 29. *v.* 34. he prefers the Levites to aſſiſt the Prieſts in killing the other Sacrifices, which never before they were admitted to.

Many other inſtances might be brought out of the Old Teſtament to this purpoſe, but theſe ſufficiently make it appear, that the beſt Princes did not think they exceeded

their own bounds, or intrenched upon God, when they prudently ordered ſuch particulars; and they are ſo far from having any blot laid upon their memories for theſe things, that they are recorded to their immortal honour.

Now ſince Magiſtrates had once ſuch a power, how came they to loſe it, or be diveſted of it? Is it that God is more curious and jealous of every punctilio in his Worſhip now, than he was heretofore? That would be the moſt abſurd ſuppoſition in the world, as we have ſufficiently demonſtrated. And he that without evident proof ſhall go about to deny them what Chriſtianity found them in poſſeſſion of, ſhall do very bad offices to the Religion he pretends ſuch zeal for. For it would be a ſmall encouragement to Princes to entertain and countenance the Chriſtian Religion, if it was told them, That the power which God had allowed them in the Old Teſtament, was now found too exorbitant, and therefore he had retrencht it in the Goſpel. Would it not mightily move Kings and Princes to become *nurſing Fathers* to the Church to hear this Doctrine preached to them?

2. The New Teſtament is frequent in aſſerting

ſerting the power of Princes and Magiſtrates, and requires all to be ſubject to them and obey them of what quality or condition ſoever, and no where excepts the caſe of Religion; therefore undoubtedly that is under their power, (ſo far I mean as Circumſtantials and thoſe things that God himſelf hath not defined) For when God hath made them a general commiſſion and made no exception of this kind, who ſhall put it upon them? If they have not power in ſuch matters of Religion as we ſpeak of, it's manifeſt they have no Magiſtracy or Legiſlative power in Religion at all. And then one would have expected the Text ſhould not have run abſolutely and in general terms, *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers*, but with this limitation, in things Civil only; or at leaſt that ſome other Scripture ſhould have as plainly reſtrained them, as this and other impowers them. Which ſince it is no where done, we wrong both our ſelves and them, to abridge them herein. Beſides that, when our Saviour tells us, *his Kingdom is not of this world*, he ſufficiently intimates, that it was neither neceſſary that he ſhould, and that conſequently he had no intention to alter the forms of Government, or revoke the Authority Governours were in poſſeſſion of.

3. It

3. It is generally acknowledged (and accordingly practiſed) that Fathers and Governours of Families have authority in matters of Religion within their own Families, at leaſt ſo far as the caſe in hand. Who doubts but the Father or Head of a Family may preſcribe what Chapters ſhall be read, what Prayers uſed, what Times ſhall be ſet apart for Devotion, what Poſtures, whether kneeling or ſtanding, and being uncovered, who ſhall officiate in his Family, and in what Habit, with innumerable others of a like nature? Do the children or ſervants uſe to require of him an expreſs Scripture to authorize his Commands, and to warrant their Conformity, or elſe they will not obey?

And if he in his private capacity and narrow ſphere hath this Authority, with what colour of Reaſon, or with what Modeſty, can every private man deny his Prince what he arrogates to himſelf? One would reaſonably think, that as Civil Government aroſe out of Paternal, it ſhould by inheritance challenge that Authority it was born to; and beſides that, as it hath a larger ſphere and a greater concern, ſo it ſhould have due to it proportionably a greater latitude of Authority.

2. If

2. If the Magiſtrate may determine thoſe matters, then not only Chriſtian Charity and Humility, but alſo common Prudence require us to preſume of the Wiſdom and Reaſonableneſs of his Determinations, and much more to obey them.

It is enough to warrant and require our Obedience, that a thing is the command of our Superiour, and not beyond the ſphere of his Authority; but if he have not only Law but Reaſon on his ſide too, then it is both a ſin and a ſhame to diſobey. Now Humility requiring that we think meanly and modeſtly of our own Reaſons, Charity that we judge favourably of anothers, and Prudence that we think beſt of the Magiſtrates; all theſe together make it our duty not only to obey, but to do it with all chearfulneſs imaginable.

It is as great as it is a common miſtake, to think Charity and Compaſſion only due from Governours to their Inferiours in the frame and compoſure of their Laws; for it is alſo as due from Inferiours towards them, and that they reciprocally make a fair and candid interpretation of their Injunctions, and that they indiſpoſe not themſelves nor others

others to obedience by irreverent cenſures of the abilities, and ſuſpicions and jealouſies of the ends and intentions of the Law-makers. It was a Saying of *Greg. Nazianzen*, well worthy of ſo wiſe and peaceable a man, Βραδὺ εἰς ὑπόνοιαν κακῆ, τὸ πρὸς κακίαν δυπλήτου, That any man the more conſcious he is to himſelf of his own honeſty and invincible integrity, ſo much the leſs prone he is to entertain ſiniſter ſuſpicions of the intentions of others. Chriſtian ſimplicity, as it means no hurt, ſo it doth not eaſily ſuſpect any; and humility and modeſty require, that men think others intend as wiſely and as honeſtly as themſelves. *Charity*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hopeth all things, believeth all things, beareth all things.* But it is the Genius of an evil man to ſuſpect every man means miſchief, becauſe he doth ſo himſelf: whereas a good man ſuppoſes every man intends well (at leaſt till the contrary appear) becauſe conſulting his own breaſt he finds that he doth ſo. For its natural for all men to take meaſures by themſelves, nor is it more reaſonable that men ſhould do as they would be done unto, than it is common and uſual for men to preſume that of others which they are privy to in their own boſoms.

It was an ingenious Repartee, that *Tertullian*

tullian made to the Pagans in his *Apology*; They accuſed *the Chriſtians that in their nocturnal aſſemblies, they took a little Child and ſealed their confederacy by eating the fleſh and drinking the blood of the harmleſs Infant:* But ſaith he, *Since you only ſuſpect and never ſaw this done, either you could do ſuch a horrid thing your ſelves, and then you are monſtrouſly unnatural; or you could not, and then you are as unreaſonable to ſuſpect that done by others, which you do not think poſſible to be done by your ſelves.*

There is nothing more frequent than for a ſilly man to ſuppoſe there are no other nor better reaſons of things, than what obviouſly appear, becauſe if there be other or better, he cannot reach them. On the contrary, a wiſe man, when the ſurface of things is weak and mean, alwayes imagines there is ſome better foundation at the bottom, becauſe he knows that he himſelf would not be led by ſuch weak conſiderations as thoſe are that appear. If therefore we would approve our ſelves either humble, or charitable, or wiſe, or good, there is no better argument to demonſtrate any of theſe by, than the cenſures we make upon the actions and intentions of others. And if any where it be of importance to give ſuch a teſtimony of our

ſelves,

ſelves, and to proceed by ſuch meaſures, it is in the caſe of the Magiſtrate, not only for the common equity, but alſo upon the account of the dignity of his place as Gods Miniſter, and the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of his Office and Miniſtry.

Is it fit, ſaith *Elihu*, Chap. 34. 18. *to be ſaid unto Princes, Ye are ungodly, or to Rulers, Ye are wicked?* Is it tolerable to repute our Governours Dolts and Ideots? to ſuſpect they have no ſenſe of their duty, or to reproach their Sanctions as Tyrannical, Superſtitious or Antichriſtian? If I muſt put the beſt conſtruction the caſe will bear, upon the Actions of my Equal or Inferiour, will it become me to make the harſheſt interpretation of publick Laws and the Actions of my Superiours?

It was an unhappy ſlip of a great and worthy perſon, whoſe name I will conceal, for the reverence I bear to his profeſſion and worth, when reflecting upon the Statute of the fifth year of Queen *Elizabeth* concerning the *Jejunium Cecilianum*, or the *Wedneſday-Faſt*; he calls it *a Law and no Law, a meer contradiction, a piece of nonſence. That it muſt bind the Conſcience if it be a Law, but the Law-makers* (ſaith he) *declare it*

ſhall

ſhall not bind the Conſcience, and ſo it is no Law: with a great deal more to that purpoſe. Now the words of the Statute are theſe; it is declared penal, if any man ſhall ſay, *That this Faſt is injoyned upon any neceſſity for the ſaving of the Soul or the ſervice of God, otherwiſe than other political Laws be.* Had that excellent perſon read and conſidered theſe words, they would have afforded him no colour for the aforeſaid imputation; for the Law-makers do not declare, that this Law ſhall not bind the Conſcience, but the contrary, that it ſhall as other Political Laws do: but they take care that the end and reaſon of the Law may be underſtood, which was not Religious but Political (for the maintenance of the Wars) I ſay that clauſe in the Statute had not the leaſt intention of limiting or declaring the obligation of the Law, but only of preventing rumours of ſuperſtitious deſigns in the end and intentions of the Law-makers. Nor is there any other the leaſt paſſage in the Law that gives countenance to the reflections he makes either upon the Law it ſelf or the Law-makers. And I note it only for this end, that we may obſerve how much more prone men are to paſs cenſures, than to conſider to the bottom, the true ſtate of the things we paſs ſentence upon.

But

But to let pass that as a meer over-sight, it is intolerable to hear the immodest clamours that are raised upon meer mistakes and surmises. Men, it seems, think to recommend themselves as persons both of more than ordinary Sagacity and also of singular purity of Conscience by finding faults of this kind. Whereas did they indeed consider either the divine Image born by Magistrates, or the great consequence of publick Peace, and well weighed how much that depends upon publick reputation and reverence, they would certainly choose some other subject to serve those little ends by.

The Scripture calls the Magistrates, *Masters of restraint*, Judges 18.7. (See the Hebrew) and as such they must needs be an eye-sore and grievance to all loose and exorbitant persons, and consequently it is mightily to their wish, that Authority should lose its force, and Laws their veneration, and thereby the sinews of all Society be loosened, that so their Extravagancies may be uncontrolled, and their Vices indemnified. Therefore by how much it is the interest of all evil men to have Magistracy and Laws in contempt, by so much is it the wisdom and concern of all sober and virtuous men to strengthen

ſtrengthen thoſe hands that others would enfeeble, and ſupport that reputation they would infringe and violate. And thoſe that conſider this, will not out of levity, wantonneſs or raſhneſs, controll Laws, or diſpute with Magiſtrates about ſmaller matters, leſt they thereby render them unable to protect them in their greater and more important concerns.

Nos ipſius dei imperium in Imperatoribus ſuſpicimus, ſaid *Tertullian* in the name of the Chriſtians in his time. They then made their interpretation of Authority and Laws in favour of obedience and of the Governour; they did not, as St. *James* expreſſes it, inſtead of *being Doers of the Law, make themſelves Judges of the Law*, and Law-makers too.

Nor will it be either a fooliſh charity or a blind obedience, to permit our ſelves to the conduct of our Superiours in thoſe little matters we diſcourſe of, ſince we have great reaſon to perſwade our ſelves, that as thoſe that ſtand higher than we, may ſee further, ſo thoſe that are concerned for the whole may give a better judgement, than thoſe that reſpect but a part. And that we our ſelves may as eaſily lye under prejudice as they;

and be as much transported with consideration of Ease and Liberty, as they may probably be suspected to be with Ambition. For why may not they have a reason for their actions which either we cannot reach, or are not come to the knowledge of? Especially since that may be best for the whole, that is less commodious to us in particular; and by being so, it is not made unlawful for him (that hath the charge and oversight of the whole) to command, nor warrantable for us to disobey. *Nulla lex satis commoda omnibus, id modò quæritur si majori parti & in summum prodest*, said *Cato* in *Livy*.

Besides (as I have intimated before) There are no less different capacities of mind than constitutions of body, and as great a difference in mens outward circumstances as in either of the former; therefore neither can the reasons of Laws be equally understood, nor the matter of Laws or the things imposed be equally easie and accommodate to the practice of all men. And consequently those that would have the Laws exactly fitted to their own humour, without respect to other men, imitate the barbarous custome of the infamous *Procrustes*, who is said to have either rackt all those persons that

that fell into his hands, and stretcht them to his own size if they were too short, or cut them off to his own proportion, if they were too long: So these men would exercise the same cruelty themselves; which they forbid the Magistrate, and lay down a principle of equal severity towards others, as of fondness and indulgence to themselves.

Till we can reconcile the divers Constitutions (I say) of mind and body, the several humours and contrary Interests of all men to one standard, it will be impossible that the wisest Constitutions imaginable, should prevent all scruple, or be alike acceptable to all Parties. Either therefore there must be no Laws made, which must be the ruine of the whole, or one of the Parties must be content upon the account of publick good, that their private Interests or Opinions be less complyed with: that is, Since the Laws cannot be fitted to every man, some men must fit and accommodate themselves to the Laws. And this being resolved on, the only question remaining will be, on which of the Parties this shall fall; that is, which shall bend to the Law. And the decision of this will be very easie; for though on the one side Self-love and favour to our own Perswasion incline us to contend for

the eaſe and incouragement of our own way, yet Chriſtian Charity on the other ſide, requires as great a condeſcenſion to our Brethren. And if now the ſcales ſeem even, then certainly the conſideration of the Magiſtrate and Laws in being will be of weight enough to turn the balance, and that Humility and Obedience our Religion teaches will prevail with us to leave it to publick Wiſdom to decide between both Parties.

And then the reſult of all will be, that inſtead of preſcribing to the Magiſtrate what he ſhall determine, or diſputing what he hath concluded on; we ſhall compoſe our minds and order our circumſtances to the more eaſie and cheerful complyance therewith. And call to mind the ſaying of *Paulus Æmilius*, who when ſeveral of his Souldiers would be ſuggeſting to him, their ſeveral Models of management, *Vos gladios acuite, bids them whet their ſwords and be ready to execute what ſhould be commanded them, but leave the management of affairs to him their General.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

wherein Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts; and that it doth not diſcharge us from Obedience to Laws.

ALL that we have hitherto diſcourſed of the Power of the Magiſtrate, ſome think may be avoided by pleading the *Magna Charta* of *Chriſtian Liberty* contained in the Goſpel. It will therefore be neceſſary in the next place to conſider the true notion and extent of that.

That there is ſuch a Charter is out of doubt, the New Teſtament frequently making mention of it, putting of us in mind of the *gratitude* we owe to him that purchaſed it for us, of *the price it coſt him*, and requiring us to *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free*, Gal. 5. 1.

But what are the Contents of it, is not ſo well agreed on; and indeed it is too evi-

dent that few of those that contend so much for it, and plead it upon all occasions, know what it is, or wherein it consists. It was a smart Answer of a *Spartan* Captive, who being exposed to sale in the Market, and there askt (as the manner was) by one that came to buy Slaves, *quid sciret, what he was good for, what business he understood: answered, Scio quid sit liberum esse, I know what belongs to freedom.* Had *Christian Liberty* been all along as well understood as talked of, the Religion had obtained more Reputation, the Church more Peace, States and Kingdoms more Security, and more Souls had gone to Heaven: but for want of this, men have committed as gross errors as that *Tully* complains of *Clodius* for, That he set up *Simulacrum Meretricis Tanagræ, The Image of a famous Harlot for that of Liberty.*

The *Gnosticks* about the Apostles times pleaded *Christian Liberty*, both on the behalf of their cowardly Revolts from Christianity in times of Persecutition, and of their sensual Debaucheries: as if the knowledge of the Truth gave a priviledge neither to profess nor practise it, when either the one proved too incommodious to their Secular Interests, or the other

too

too diſguſtful to their ſenſual inclinations.

Others, and they alſo in the firſt times of Chriſtianity, thought Chriſtian Liberty had been a Civil Infranchiſement, and had extended ſo far as to cancell all bonds of peoples ſubjection to their Princes, or of Servants to their Maſters; and hereupon like the pretence of zeal amongſt the *Jews* (in their degenerate times) Chriſtian Liberty was the Paſsport of fugitive ſervants, and the pretext for Outrages and Rebellions. And this made it neceſſary for the Apoſtles almoſt in all their Writings to preſs Obedience to Superiours.

A third ſort of men have miſtaken this Goſpel Liberty to be a diſcharge from the obligation of the Moral Law, and have been ſo prodigiouſly abſurd as to take the Goſpel to contain nothing elſe properly, but a publication of Gods Promiſes or Decrees rather, and to require only a bare aſſent to them or belief of them, and that thoſe Promiſes are abſolute and without any condition of our obedience, ſave only as that ſhould reciprocally become us by way of gratitude, not that juſtification or ſalvation depended upon it. This is the Doctrine of the *Antinomians* or modern Libertines, and

is a perſwaſion fit to debauch the whole world, were it not that few men can be ſo unreaſonable as to believe it, though they would. But it is ſo contrary to the very name and nature of a Covenant, which the Goſpel is ſtyled to be, ſo expreſly contrary to the whole deſign of Chriſtian Doctrine, and goes ſo croſs to the very ſenſe of every honeſt mind, that I ſhall not ſpend any more time or words about it.

There is a fourth miſtake, which (though I will not ſay it is equally dangerous with any of the former, yet) is miſchievous enough and equally falſe. That though the bonds of Civil Subjection are not quite diſſolved by the Goſpel, yet that all Chriſtians are diſcharged from the interpoſitions of the Magiſtrate in affairs of Religion, and that there he ought no further to intermeddle, than he can produce expreſs warrant from Scripture for his particular Injunctions. But if notwithſtanding the Governour ſhall arrogate to himſelf a larger ſphere of Authority, and make any definitions in Religion, or eſpecially the matters of the firſt Table, It is then and in that caſe not only lawful for a good Chriſtian to refuſe Obedience, but that it is his duty ſo to do, to withſtand an Invaſion of his Chriſtian Liberty, and

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an incroachment upon the Prerogative of God.

This is the mistake that is most rife amongst us, and which hath given occasion to much of the unhappiness of this Age. It is not my work laboriously to confute this opinion, nor do I think many words necessary in the case, yet of the many absurd consequences let us note these following.

1. This opinion makes all Civil Government the most tickliſh and uncertain, and the condition of Magistrates the most servile and precarious, that can well be imagined; forasmuch as there is scarcely any thing can fall under their care and cognizance, or capable to be made matter of Law or Injunction, but hath such affinity to, or connexion with Religion, as to be sufficient (upon this principle) to raise a dispute of Jurisdiction.

So that the case between the Civil Laws and Religion will be like the condition of affairs that often happens in those places where the Supremacy of the Pope and Court of *Rome* is received, there is a perpetual contention about bounds and limits of Jurisdiction between the Civil and Ecclesiasti-

cal

cal Courts; for whileſt the Civil Judge goes about to take cognizance of the cauſe, the Eccleſiaſtical will (it may be) challenge the perſon as belonging to his Juriſdiction: or if the perſon be Laick and *alieni fori*, yet it will go hard but the cauſe ſhall be found to have ſome connexion with Religion, and ſo the Eccleſiaſtical Court either directly or *in ordine ad ſpiritualia* draws all matters to it.

And not unlike was the ſtate of affairs a long while together in the Kingdom and Church of *Scotland* by virtue of this very perſwaſion: The Prince or the State could enact nothing almoſt but the *Kirk-men* found themſelves grieved and Religion concerned, and Excommunication is denounced: The *Kirk* on the other ſide make their Decrees, and the Civil Power declares them null, and grants Prohibitions, *&c.* He that will ſatisfie himſelf of the truth of theſe things and thereby convince himſelf of the miſchief of the Principle we are ſpeaking of, let him read the Judicious Hiſtory of the Church of *Scotland* written by the Moſt Reverend Arch-Biſhop *Spotſwood*: And he ſhall find that this unhappy notion raiſed and maintained for many years *a bellum limitaneum*, and that it is like the Marches or bateable ground betwixt

twixt two bordering Potentates, a Scene of contention and a field of blood. Whereas did we agree of certain Limits, and make the Magistrates Power and Province extend to all that which God hath not taken in by expres Law, both Gods Glory and the Magistrates Authority would be kept entire, and there would be neither cause nor room for Controversie.

2. This opinion at once condemns all the States and Kingdoms in the whole world of Impiety and Irreligion, forasmuch as there neither is, nor ever hath been any such constitution, as hath not had some Laws of Religion that could not be deduced particularly from the Scriptures. And so he that is of this perswasion and will be true to it, is bound in Conscience to be a Rebel whereever he lives.

3. It is an unreasonable Fear, a meer Melancholy Jealousie, and expres Superstition instead of Religion, to suspect that either the Magistrate can offend in making, or the people in obeying such Laws as (though they are not expresly warranted, yet) are no where forbidden by the Scripture. For it is a supposition that a man may be a Sinner, when yet he breaks no Law, contrary to the expres

expreſs words of St. *John*, 1 *Ep.* 3. 4. who defineth Sin to be *a tranſgreſſion of a Law.* And as is the uſual Genius of all Superſtition, it miſ-repreſents God as cruel and tyrannical, that can condemn men *ex poſt facto*, for doing of that againſt which there was no Law in being. But,

4. Which is moſt obſervable, this Doctrine inſtead of aſſerting Chriſtian Liberty, in truth ſubverts it, and layes far more ſevere bonds upon the Conſciences of men than the very Law of *Moſes* did. That was a yoke (ſay the Apoſtles, Acts 15. 10.) *which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*, upon this account, eſpecially, becauſe it injoyned a great number of little Obſervances, which by their multitude were hard to be remembred, by their nicety difficult to be obſerved, and by their meer poſitive nature, and having no eſſential goodneſs in themſelves, had leſs power upon the Conſciences of men to awaken their care and diligence about them. It is manifeſt that Law contained no precept that was in it ſelf impoſſible to be performed, but becauſe it is hard for the mind of man to attend to many things at once, eſpecially if alſo the things in which his care and obedience is required be ſuch, as are not enacted in his Conſcience, and when

when he can see no other reason of, or advantage by his obedience, but meerly his obedience, therefore was that Law called impossible. Now if a man were bound by the Gospel to avoid all those particulars that were commanded by *Moses*, it is plain, the servitude and the difficulty would be the same; but if not only so, but he be also bound to avoid all that which the Scripture is silent in, his obligation is infinite, and his servitude intolerable. For Positives are determinate and definite, and so fall more easily within our care and attention: but Negatives are infinite, and therefore such a yoke must be properly impossible.

These mistakes therefore being removed, The true Notion of Christian Liberty will best be understood, if we consider, That in the times of the Old Testament, the visible Church of God was inclosed within a narrow pale, and none could be members of it, without submission to Circumcision and the other Rites of *Judaism*. Whence it came to pass, that at the first publication of the Gospel, it was a riddle and an astonishment to the very Apostles themselves, that the *Gentiles* were to be taken into it. And when the effecting this was taken in hand, *Acts* 15. 1. the Jewish Christians stood upon their

their priviledge, and would not admit the *Gentile* Converts into Society, nor become of one body with them, unleſs they would *be circumciſed and keep the Law.* Hereupon a Council is called, and there the Apoſtles find out a temper and middle way for both parts to meet in for the preſent, which was that the *Gentile* Converts ſhould ſubmit to the terms of Proſelytiſm at large or the precepts given to the Sons of *Noah*, as ſome underſtand the paſſage, or (as is indubitable) that they ſhould comply with the *Jews* in theſe three things, *of abſtaining from fornication, from things ſtrangled, and from blood.* And on the other ſide, the *Jewiſh* Converts ſhould abate of their rigor, and not require of the *Gentiles* the ſtrict terms of compleat *Judaiſm.* At which deciſion the *Gentile* Chriſtians were tranſported with Joy, *rejoyced at the conſolation,* v. 31.

For (as I ſaid) till then, none could be of the ſame body with the *Jews* in reſpect of viſible Church Society, without Circumciſion and univerſal ſubmiſſion to the Law of *Moſes.* This therefore was an expedient for the preſent, till the *Jews* ſhould be by degrees better inſtructed in the liberty of that Chriſtian Religion they had lately received. But when the Goſpel was fully publiſhed,

then

then the aforeſaid Incloſure is laid open, and all Nations invited into the Society of the Church upon equal terms, neither party being bound to thoſe nice Laws of *Moſes*, nor any other but thoſe plain and reaſonable ones contained in the Goſpel, and ſuch other (not contradictory to them) as publick Wiſdom, Peace and Charity ſhould dictate and recommend.

And to this purpoſe is the obſervation of *Euſebius* in his *Præparatio Evangelica*, "That "Chriſtianity is nothing elſe but the old "Patriarchal Religion revived, a reſtitution "of that Primitive ſimplicity and liberty "that was before the Law of *Moſes*, and "that now there lyes no more bonds upon "the Conſciences of Chriſtians, than did up-"on the Antient Patriarchs, ſaving thoſe im-"provements our Saviour hath made upon "the Law of Nature, and thoſe few poſitive "Inſtitutions of his expreſly ſet down in "the Goſpel. And that men obeying theſe "are at liberty to conform to whatſoever "common Reaſon and equity, or publick Au-"thority ſhall impoſe. And this diſcourſe of *Euſebius* is in effect the ſame with that of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 4. and *Gal.* 3. eſpecially *v.* 19. where he puts this queſtion, *Wherefore then ſerved the Law?* he anſwers, *it*

it was added, &c. it was a kind of *interim*, or like a *parentheſis*, which when it ſhall be left out, the former and latter parts joyn together again, without any interruption of the ſence. That is, when this *interim* or temporary proviſion of the Law ſhall be taken away, the Primitive Patriarchal Religion and that brought in by our Saviour ſhall ſeem to be of one piece, the latter beginning where the former ended.

The Contents then of the great Charter purchaſed for us, and brought in by our Lord *Jeſus*, are theſe; That beſide the freeing of us from the power and dominion of ſin, which the Law of *Moſes* could not do, and from the Tyranny of Sathan which the *Gentile* world lay under till Chriſt came; I ſay, beſides theſe (which are no matters of our preſent diſpute) our Chriſtian Infranchiſement diſcharges us not only from a neceſſity of obſerving the *Moſaick* Law and Rites of *Judaiſm*, but further and eſpecially ſets our Conſciences at Liberty to purſue our own Reaſon, and to obey any Laws of men that ſhall not contradict the expreſs Laws of the Goſpel. That we are as perfectly free as thoſe were that lived before any Scripture was written, as to all thoſe things that are not determined in thoſe Scriptures; and that

that within all that ſphere we may without guilt or burden upon our Conſciences, ſerve all the intereſts of peace and order in the world. And conſequently, that neither the Magiſtrate need to fetch a particular warrant from the Scripture to authorize his Preſcriptions, nor we an expreſs licence thence to legitimate our reſpective obedience; but the former may freely conſult his own reaſon, common prudence and the intereſt of his Government, and the latter their own peace and tranquillity.

This is true and real Freedom, when with a good and a quiet Conſcience we may conform our ſelves to the Wiſdom of our Superiours, and the intereſts of Society; when I have a power *in utramque*, and may do or leave undone all thoſe matters that are not defined in Scripture, according as publick Laws and the ends of all Society ſhall require.

And that this is the true notion of Chriſtian Liberty will appear further by this, That the Apoſtle in ſeveral of his Epiſtles, but eſpecially that to the *Romans*, injoyns the Chriſtians in their ſcruples about Eating or not Eating of certain Meats, and in the conduct of themſelves in all ſuch matters,

to *conſult charity towards their weak Brethren, the peace of the Church, and their own edification*; that is, ſuch principles of reſolving ſcruples as before I deſcribed, and bids them not to apply themſelves to any Scripture, or to expect a determination of ſuch queſtions thence. See *Rom.* 14. 3, 5, 13, 14, 15, 19. and *chap.* 15. *v.* 2, *&c.* From whence theſe two things follow.

1. That Chriſtian Liberty doth conſiſt in a freedom *in utramque*, that is, that antecedently to the conſiderations of Prudence, Peace and Charity, it is equally in the power of a Chriſtian to do or not do any or all thoſe things that are not expreſly forbidden by the holy Scriptures: and that where the Scripture is ſilent the Conſcience is free in the general, and only to be determined by thoſe conſiderations.

2. That it is no infringement, but an exerciſe of this liberty, actually to be determined to that ſide towards which Prudence or Charity ſhall incline, though in the mean time the other ſide be in the general as lawful as that. Hence it is that we find liberty and condeſcenſion or ſelf-denyal joyned together by St. *Paul*, Gal. 5. 13. *Ye have been called unto liberty, only uſe not liber-*

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ty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another; and by St. *Peter*, 1 Ep. 2. 16. *As free, yet not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* Which two places are so clear in themselves, as no Commentary can make them more so, and so full to our purpose, that nothing further can reasonably be desired.

And so these two points thus gained, will give abundant foundation for a third to be inferred from them, *viz.* That whatsoever is so free to me that I may do it or not do it, according as I shall be inclined by the consideration of Brotherly Charity and Compassion, must of necessity be also as free to me to obey the Magistrate and serve publick Peace and Order in, without either prostitution of my Liberty, or violation of Gods right and Prerogative. For whatsoever I may do in compassion to my Brothers infirmity, surely that I may much more do in reverence to Gods Ordinance, the Lawful Magistrate; which is the point we have all this while drove at.

CHAP. VIII.

Of a Tender Conſcience, what it is, and its Priviledges.

IF pleading our Charter of Chriſtian Liberty will not give us a diſcharge from Obedience to our Superiours, whether in things Sacred or Civil, as I have proved it cannot, yet poſſibly the plea of a *Tender Conſcience* may.

This is thought to have not only a Priviledge, but a kind of Prerogative, to carry with it an exemption from all humane Laws whatſoever, but eſpecially Eccleſiaſtical. It pretends to be Gods *peculiar*, and *exempt* from any inferiour cognizance, like the Monaſtick Orders in the Church of *Rome*, which are immediately and only ſubject to the Pope, ſo this to Gods Tribunal and none elſe: Nay, it looks like a Dictatorian Authority, and ſeem to be *legibus ſoluta*. This (they would make us believe) can limit the Magiſtrate,

gistrate, null Laws, forbid execution, and which is yet more, change the very nature of things, and make that good and holy which was wicked and rebellious before. This can canonize any Opinion, legitimate any action, warrant any extravagancy in the person that owns it. The man of a Tender Conscience may pass all guards; all mounds and barrs that are set to confine others, must be open to him. *He is a righteous man, and for him there is no Law*, no controllment, no punishment. The Tenderness of his Conscience is an inviolable Sanctuary, and he that meddles with such a man, is a *fighter against God.* Make use of the best arguments to convince him, discourse to him with the greatest evidence, he is not bound to hear you, his Conscience is his Priest, Prophet and King too, he hangs and draws and all within himself (as we say;) whatsoever he *thinks* can be no heresie, and whatsover he *does* can be no sin.

Unless therefore we can pull down this Usurper, we must look for no Magistracy, and except we discover the weakness and absurdity of this pretension, all endeavours of restoring Uniformity in the Church will be vain and useless. Let us 1. Therefore consider what *Conscience* is in general, and

then we ſhall better come to underſtand the grounds and ſtrength of this mighty pretender: 2. What a *tender* Conſcience is; 3. What *priviledges* or *exemptions* it may lay claim to.

1. What *Conſcience* is. And indeed the original of the miſtake in this matter ſeems to lye here; ſome have given ſuch pompous and Romantick deſcriptions of Conſcience, that they have beguiled men into an apprehenſion that it is far a Mightier Potentate than indeed it is. I have read of a vulgar perſon, who firſt having heard himſelf reſembled to the Prince for ſtature and complexion, and afterwards heightned up into the conceit by the flatteries of ſome and arts of others that had ends to ſerve by him, came at laſt to conceit himſelf to be the Prince indeed, and gave ſufficient trouble to the King in poſſeſſion. Men have ſpoken ſo magnificently of Conſcience, that divers have grown into a belief, that it was ſome Ghoſt or Spirit, and little thought it was nothing but their own inconſiderable ſelves.

It is called a *Tutelar Genius*, *a Familiar*, *a Domeſtick Deity*, *a God within men*, and at leaſt Gods Vicegerent inthroned in our boſoms. Now under theſe diſguiſes men have been

been ready to fall down and worſhip themſelves, and like the Pagans, have given Divine honours to their own Paſſions; but the leaſt that could follow from ſuch premiſes, was that the Magiſtrate muſt ſtrike ſail to this admired Numen. Hence probably Quakeriſm took its riſe, the men of which way are generally a ſtubborn and incurable generation: Bring Scripture or Reaſon or any Authority againſt them, they ſlight all, and only appeal to the light within them, that mighty Deity, that internal Chriſt, their Conſcience. Hence alſo it's probable, that miſchievous principle aroſe, That it is lawful to do Evil that Good may come of it, in ſpite of the Apoſtle: And it is believed that for a good cauſe, and under a good intention (that is, the perſwaſion of our Conſcience, (eſpecially if Providence alſo ſmile upon our undertakings, and incourage us with hopes of ſucceſs,) that it is lawful for any man of what quality ſoever to ſet up for a Reformer and turn the world upſide down. Nay; ſo far have ſome been bewildred by theſe cloudy and miſty deſcriptions, that whatſoever Humour hath been predominant in their Bodies, whatever Paſſion of their Mind, whatever Prejudice of Education, or Intereſt, or Profit, all this hath paſt for Conſcience, and under that name been uncontrollable.

But now if ſuch men would conſider, and loved plain *Engliſh*, and to underſtand what they ſay, Conſcience is neither God, nor Angel, nor Spirit, nor any thing that will bear all that weight is thus laid upon it. But is plainly this and no more; namely, *It is a mans own mind or underſtanding under the diſtinct conſideration of reflecting upon himſelf, his own actions and duty.* When we take notice of things that do not concern us morally, then this notice is called underſtanding only, or mind, or opinion, or ſcience, or ſome ſuch name; but when we conſider whether a thing be good or evil morally, lawful or unlawful, that is, whether it be agreeable to ſuch a rule of action or ſuitable to the end of eternal happineſs, then we call this notice or reflection of our mind, Conſcience.

Now when we ſpeak thus plainly, a great part of the aforeſaid Legendary conceits vaniſh; for ſcarcely any man that ſayes his Conſcience is incontrollable, will ſay his own opinion or Reaſon is the ultimate rule of his actions: but will confeſs he may as a man err and be miſtaken, and therefore hath need of a Guide, or ſome Law or light to direct him. Therefore it is plain, that men

men deceive themſelves with Metaphors, with words and phraſes.

Some man perhaps will ſay, That allowing Conſcience to be nothing but the Mind of man as aforeſaid, yet even ſo it is ſubject to no humane Laws, foraſmuch as no man can force me to think otherwiſe than I do, nor compell me to be of his opinion in the inward ſence of my mind: My Mind therefore or Conſcience is only obnoxious to God.

But the anſwer to this is eaſie, That though it be true, that neither men can know my thoughts, nor put any conſtraint upon the free actings of my Mind; yet for all this, ſince my Mind is not infallible, I may and muſt needs have ſomething to guide my mind, in its judgement and determinations, and that is it which we call *Law*; and though this cannot force me to follow its direction, yet it morally obliges me, that is, it will be my ſin if I do not. In ſhort; The moſt that Mind or Conſcience can pretend to, is to be a Judge, yet is it but ſuch a Judge as is ſubject to the Laws, and they muſt guide it, as that guides the man, or otherwiſe its petty Soveraignty that it pretends to, will not ſecure it from the wrath of the great Soveraign of the world, by whom Kings reign.

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But if it be further objected, That we are notwithstanding bound to obey the dictates of our Mind or Conscience before any Law or command of any humane Authority whatsoever, if they happen to interfere.

I answer, It is true in things notoriously and plainly evil, and the reason is, (not because my Mind or Conscience supersedes the Law of the Magistrate, but) because some higher Law of God or Reason by which my Conscience is guided, hath in that case made a nullity in the Law of the Magistrate; for if my Conscience have not the direction and warranty of such superiour Law, the meer Opinion of my Mind or Conscience will afford me no security, for where those are silent, there the Law of the Magistrate is the immediate Rule of my Conscience; and then to oppose or contradict that, is to affront the publick Tribunal with a private Consistory, and to set my own Opinion against Gods Institution.

If yet it be further urged, That if after all my consideration of the reason of publick Laws, I cannot satisfie my self of the lawfulness of the thing commanded, I must then govern my self by my Conscience, and not by the Law. I reply,

I reply, That if the unlawfulness of the thing commanded is not as plain and visible, as the Command of God for obeying Authority is, my Opinion or Conscience will be no excuse to me, because I forsake a certain Rule to follow an uncertain.

But if after all endeavours of satisfying my self to obey the humane Law, yet the thing commanded by the Magistrate (however innocent it may be in it self) seems to me as plainly unlawful, as obedience is plainly a duty, I say this case is pittyable, and will make some abatement of the sin of disobedience, but doth not totally excuse it, much less make a nullity of the Law. It cannot make the Law null; for that depends upon its own Reasonableness and the Authority enacting it, and not upon the Conceptions of men. Nor can it totally excuse from sin, *for sin is the transgression of a Law*, according to the definition of the Apostle. All therefore that can be allowed in the case is, That by reason of such a mans unhappy circumstances, his disobedience will then be only a sin of infirmity, which is pittyable amongst men upon consideration of common humanity, and is pardonable with God as other errors are upon a general repentance.

2. Now

2. Now let us proceed to consider what a *Tender* Conscience is, and how that will alter the case.

And it is no more easie to find out what men mean by Tenderness, than what they meant by Conscience. Doubtless when men speak of a Tender Conscience, they do not mean such an one as will endure no check or restraint, that like an unbroken Horse will admit of no rein of Government: nor yet a nice and phantastical Conscience, that can brook nothing contrary to its own humour. These at the first view are plainly vitious and most of all need and deserve the restraint of Laws, and to be inured to that they so stubbornly decline.

Nor yet on the other side, can Tenderness be taken in the same latitude with a Good Conscience. Every good man hath such a tenderness as to be afraid of sin, and to decline the occasions and temptations to it; and it would be too arrogant and presumptuous for those that plead the tenderness of their Consciences, to suppose themselves the only men that make Conscience of what they do; for then the contrary to a tender Conscience must be a brawny and obdurate

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or stupid Conscience: which it would be too contumelious to reproach all other men but themselves with.

It remains then, That that which is meant by Tenderness, is something betwixt these two; namely, neither a steady well instructed, nor yet a sturdy and rebellious Conscience, but a weak, unsetled and timorous one. And now having before resolved Conscience in general to be nothing but the Mind or practical Understanding, a Tender Conscience will be nothing but either an ignorant or uninstructed Mind, or a sickly, melancholy and superstitious Understanding. And then to speak plainly, A man of a tender Conscience is such a person, as being right and honest for the main, yet either through the weakness of his Intellectuals or prejudices of his Education, or through the melancholy of his Constitution, doth not rightly understand his duty, and consequently is apt to doubt and scruple and fear where no fear is; and by this mistake (from the causes aforesaid) renders those things evil to himself that are not so in themselves.

Now this being so, that a Tender Conscience is this and no more, a man will justly wonder whence it should come to pass, that either

either the pretence of such a Conscience should be a matter of ambition as we see it is with some, and much more that it should be thought fit to give Laws to the world as it seems to be the mind of others.

However we grant it pittyable, but before we shew what priviledges it may claim, we will a little unfold more particularly the qualifications it must have to be able to sue out its priviledges. And in general I have said already, That such a person must be right and sincerely honest for the main. Now of that he that pleads tender Conscience, must give proof in these following Instances.

1. He that pleads for Compassion upon the account of his Weakness, must be so ingenuous as willingly to submit himself to instruction, for he that scorns it, and thinks himself wiser than all the world besides, of all men hath the least right to make this plea. I do not see how he that hath the confidence to be a Preacher to others, or a Disputer for opinions, can pretend to the priviledges of that Tenderness we speak of. For either a man owns himself an ignorant or a knowing man; if he be an ignorant man, he ought not to take upon him to teach others, but to learn; if he be a knowing

knowing man, he ought not to ſcruple, but to obey.

2. He that pretends Tenderneſs of Conſcience, muſt make good his claim by being uniformly conſcientious; that is, making as much Conſcience in other things, as that he pleads exemption from. Otherwiſe it will be but Phariſaiſm, *to ſtrain at a Gnat and ſwallow a Camel. Davids heart ſmote him when he cut off the skirt of* Saul's *Garment*, but it would never have been called Tenderneſs of Conſcience in *David*, if at another time he ſhould have attempted the life of *Saul*. St. *Auſtin* ſpeaks of ſome that preſcribed to themſelves ſtricter limits of Matrimony than the Laws did, *per Mores non fiebat quod per Leges licebat, & factum horrebatur licitum, ob vicinitatem illiciti.* But then, they were ſeverly holy men in all their converſation, otherwiſe this would have deſerved no better eſteem than Superſtition in them or worſe. He that ſhall ſcruple a Ceremony, and neglects an Inſtitution of Chriſt, that dares not kneel at the Sacrament, but dares neglect the Communion, that ſcruples the obſervation of *Lent*, but ſcruples not Senſuality or Luſt, Drunkenneſs or Gluttony, that is afraid to *eat* blood, but not afraid to *ſhed* the blood of men, that will abſtain from

from things ſtrangled, but not from fornication: Let ſuch a man pretend what he will, he neither hath nor can plead the priviledges of a Tender Conſcience.

3. He that is truly tender, if he cannot do all that he is commanded, will yet do all that he can. He will not make the breach wider, nor the diſtance greater than needs muſt, leſt he ſhould betray more of humour and ſtomach than Conſcience. He that cannot bow at the name of *Jeſus*, yet perhaps can ſtand up at the Creed; or if not that neither, yet probably he can be preſent at it. He that cannot kneel when he is required, may expreſs ſo much reverence as to ſtand; And he that is not ſatisfied in all the parts of the publick Prayers, may poſſibly be able to come to Church; or if none of theſe, yet at leaſt

4. He that cannot perform what the Laws require of him, may forbear judging and cenſuring thoſe that do. His Conſcience is a rule to himſelf, but doth not oblige him to paſs ſevere Cenſures upon all other men. It is a very proud Conſcience that will tranſcend its own Province, and preſcribe to all the world beſides. If he be weak and ignorant, it is very unſuitable that he ſhould carry himſelf

himself as the only sagacious man, and make his mind the publick standard of truth and falshood, of good and evil. For in so doing he contradicts himself, pleads ignorance and pretends knowledge, would be dealt with as the most weak, but deals by others as if he was the most strong and skilful.

The man of a tender Conscience finds it enough to rule and judge his own actions, but leaves other men *to their own masters.* He is so modest upon the sense of his own defects, and consequently so charitable as to think other men may know a reason of that he is not satisfied in. But they that must erect a Judicature for all those that differ from them, and arraign them of Superstition or Popery, that are not of their own mind, shall sooner convict themselves of pride and pragmaticalness, than give proof of any true tenderness of Conscience.

5. The truly tender Conscience will freely part with Money and whatever else uses to be valuable of that kind to preserve its own Innocency and Peace, and is far from the humour of pretending Conscience to advance his Gain, or excuse his Purse. If such a man cannot conform to the Laws, yet he can pay the penalty; if he cannot go to Church, he

can pay his Tythes: otherwiſe it is his *Money* he is tender of, and not his *Conſcience*; his God is his Gain, and his Profit his Conſcience. He that comes up to theſe five points of honeſty, may be heard in his plea of Tenderneſs, and no man elſe. And now I will in the laſt place ſhew what conſideration is to be had of ſuch a caſe, and that in theſe three particulars.

1. Every private Chriſtian is bound in charity and compaſſion towards ſuch a man, to deny himſelf of ſome part of his liberty, to pleaſe and to gain him. That is, in thoſe things that are the matter of no Law, but left free and undeterminate, there the rule of the Apoſtle takes place, Rom. 15. 1, 2. *We that are ſtrong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves. And let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification.* I ſay, in ſuch things as are not the matter of any Law, for I may not do evil that good may come of it; I muſt not break either the Laws of God or man out of an humour of complaiſance to my Brother, for this were as we ſay, to rob *Peter* to pay *Paul*, or to commit Theft or Sacriledge, that I may give Alms. But in ſuch things, as both the Laws of God and man have left me at liberty,

berty, and at my own diſpoſe, I may then juſtly and ought in charity to conſider his weakneſs, rather than uſe my own ſtrength; and ought not to walk over Rocks and Precipices, where I know the infirmity of others is ſuch that they cannot follow me. For though my own ſtrength would bear me up, yet it were very charitable to deſcend from that height which I know others cannot climb up to without giddineſs.

To do all that I may do without danger to my ſelf, and not at all to regard what others can comply with, or to uſe my own liberty to the offence of others, is to be unchriſtian and uncharitable. It is to ſurfeit of my own abundance when my Brother is in want. And in this ſenſe only are we to underſtand all theſe diſcourſes of the Apoſtle about Scandal and Offence. In thoſe times the Magiſtrate being Pagan, took no care of the Church, nor had paſſed any Laws concerning the manage of the Chriſtian Religion; therefore whatſoever God had left free and undetermined, was ſo ſtill: ſo that the Chriſtians had a great deal of ſcope and room for mutual condeſcenſion, and accordingly the Apoſtle exhorts them, that in all that *materia libera, they ſhould by love ſerve one another.* And with great

equity; for he that will provoke his Brother to ſin, by doing that which he himſelf can omit without ſin, is guilty of ſin in ſo doing. But the caſe is quite otherwiſe when there is a Law in being; for if my Brother will be offended, unleſs I break a Law to comply with him, in that caſe Charity begins at home, as we ſay, I muſt look to my ſelf firſt, and if he take offence, he doth take it where it is not given, for I do but my duty. And as I may and muſt give Alms of what is my own, and what I can ſpare from my own occaſions, but am neither bound to deprive my ſelf of neceſſaries, that I may ſerve any mans needs, nor much leſs to rob another of his right, that I may furniſh him that wants; ſo the ſame Charity requires that in all thoſe caſes where no Law of God or man hath reſtrained my liberty, I there conſider the infirmity of a another, rather than the pleaſing of my ſelf. And that this is it which St. *Paul* meant in all thoſe paſſages, appears by conſideration of the inſtance he gives in himſelf, and wherewith he concludes the argument, 1 Cor. 8. 13. *Wherefore if meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtands.* The eating of fleſh was under no Law, and conſequently he ſhould not offend if he forbore it, therefore he reſolves that he

he would abridge himſelf of his own liberty, rather than offend another.

2. It becomes the wiſdom and compaſſion of a Chriſtian Magiſtrate ſo far to conſider the ſatisfaction of peoples Minds as well as the peace and ſafety of his Dominions, as not to make thoſe things the matter of his Laws which he foreſees mens weakneſs will make them boggle at: unleſs there be weighty reaſons on the other hand to counterballance that conſideration. Such as, that the things which ſome ſcruple, are nevertheleſs neceſſary to Government, or grateful to a greater or more conſiderable part of his Subjects. If without theſe conſiderations he ſhall however conſtitute ſuch Laws, I will not ſay ſuch Laws are therefore null, (for the weakneſs of people doth not take away his power) but I will ſay they are unkind and ungracious. But thoſe conſiderations being ſuppoſed, that is, if ſuch Conſtitutions as are apt to be ſcrupled by ſome, be yet either neceſſary to Government, or very grateful to the more conſiderable part of his Subjects, he hath then no obligation upon him to conſider the offence of a few, but the good and ſafety of the whole. Yet when thoſe intereſts are ſecured, there is great ſcope for his compaſſion, and conſe-

quently it is the duty of a good Magiſtrate (as of a good Shepherd) to drive as the Cattle can go.

3. If it ſhall be found neceſſary upon the conſiderations before intimated, or any the like, to make ſuch things matter of Law that were before indifferent in themſelves, and which being ſo made, are likely to be ſcrupled by thoſe who ought to obey; It becomes a Chriſtian Magiſtrate who conſiders he governs Men and not Beaſts, to afford means of inſtruction to ſuch weak and ſcrupulous perſons, and competent time for thoſe inſtructions to take place, and in the mean time to ſuſpend rigorous executions. For it is not in mens power to believe what they liſt, much leſs what others would have them: and it hath alwayes been found that force without inſtruction hath been prevalent only upon the worſt of men, and ſet the more conſcientious farther off by prejudice. But after ſuch inſtruction afforded and time allowed, if then ſuch perſons be not rightly informed and ſatisfied, yet the Magiſtrate is unblameable, for he commands but what is reaſonable in it ſelf, and he hath done what lay in him, that mens Judgements might be convinced, and Conſcience quieted.

It is very obſervable that in the Council held by the Apoſtles at *Jeruſalem*, Acts 15. of which I have ſometimes made mention, whilſt there was hopes of gaining the *Jews* to Chriſtianity, and until they had time to be ſufficiently inſtructed in it if they would, for ſo long time the Apoſtles uſed them with great tenderneſs, and as it appears made that Decree in complyance with them, whereby they abridged the *Gentiles* of the exerciſe of a conſiderable part of their Chriſtian Liberty in meer condeſcenſion to the *Jews:* but after ſuch time as the *Jews* might have been ſufficiently inſtructed, but remained incurable and obſtinate, then this Indulgence grew into *deſuetude*, and the *Gentiles* reſumed their due liberty. From the ſame conſideration was it that St. *Paul* (as I alſo obſerved before) practiſed Circumciſion in the caſe of *Timothy*, which he otherwiſe declared uſeleſs and dangerous. And again upon the ſame grounds did the Apoſtolical Canons enjoyn the obſervation of the *Jewiſh* Sabbath as well as the *Lords Day*, and ſeveral other things were both acted by private Chriſtians, and decreed by the Authority of Councils in favour of the *Jews*, till they appeared no longer pittiably weak and ignorant, but contumacious and intractable.

tractable. And as the Elder Christians did by the *Jews*, so seems the Great *Constantine* to have done by the Pagans; He considered that those that had been all their lifetime kept in the darkness of *Gentilism*, could not presently bear so great a light as Christianity. Therefore though he zealously recommended it, yet he did not presently make it penal not to be a Christian, but for a time gave every one leave to be of what Religion he would, to choose his own God and his own way of Worship. In the mean time care was taken, that all should have opportunity of understanding the truth if they would, which when they had enjoyed for a competent time, he then requires all the *Roman* Empire to imbrace Christianity. This last instance I confess fits not the very matter we have in hand, which is touching things in their own nature indifferent: But it agrees with the general reason of proceeding, which is sufficient to my purpose.

But now after all this, if people will not be instructed, but shall be so ridiculous as to pride themselves in their folly, and glory to continue weak, when they may be strong, that is, will affect Ignorance, to countenance Disobedience, I see no obligation upon the Magistrate either to forbear to make or execute

cute such Laws as he apprehends for the good of his Government, as I said before.

And so I hope I have cleared this point, That though a Tender Conscience hath its Priviledges, yet it hath not such a Prerogative as to null the Laws, or suspend the Power of the Magistrate in the Sphere of Religion. And therefore this pretence will be no longer an excuse for mens Non-conformity to the Laws and Church of *England*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The great diſhonour that diſobedience to Laws and Magiſtrates, and the diſtractions of Government do to any Profeſſion of Religion whatſoever.

HAving, as I think, ſufficiently demonſtrated the ſin and miſchiefs of Schiſm, and evacuated all the excuſes and palliations of it from the plea of Chriſtian Liberty or the pretence of Tender Conſcience, I cannot ſee what ſhould remain able to perpetuate our diſtractions, unleſs it be a point of honour, that ſome think themſelves obliged to perſevere, becauſe they have begun: A humour like that *Tully* notes and taxes in the Stoicks, That when Arguments failed them, Conſtancy ſupplyed that defect, and that they were not deſerted of their Courage, when they were deſtitute of Reaſon. It is, I confeſs, too common with men, to the intent that they may not ſeem to have had a bad and indefenſible Cauſe at firſt, they will indeavour

indeavour to give it reputation by the courage and conſtancy of the Defendants, whereby they hope to gain one of theſe points, that either by Victory they ſhall have it adjudged to them, or at leaſt extort Honourable conditions to lay down Arms, which is a kind of parting ſtakes. Hereupon it is far more eaſie to convince men, than to ſatisfie them, becauſe at laſt it comes to be a contention of Honour and Spirit, and not a debate of Truth.

They ſay, nothing ſubdues *Engliſh* Spirits but Ceſſion and Condeſcenſion; yield them a little, and they will in Bravery and Generoſity, give you up all the reſt: but if you continue to contend, they will fight, not becauſe it's either hopeful or neceſſary, neither becauſe they can reaſonably hope to obtain the victory, nor becauſe they muſt be ruined if they do not, but becauſe they cannot brook the diſhonour of being vanquiſht. Honour is a kind of *Gentile* Conſcience, and tender like that too. And I confeſs, though it be a very virtuous, yet it is no very eaſie thing, to come about perfectly, to change ones courſe, and to proclaim ones ſelf to have been in the wrong before, to forgo a mans opinion and his reputation together, wholly

wholly to yield up the cauſe we have long contended for, without any conditions to ſalve our honour, without abatement, qualification or comprehenſion. For though wiſe men will cenſure our obſtinacy if we perſiſt, yet the multitude will reproach us with levity and cowardize if we retreat. And though many a man could contentedly give up himſelf to the inſtruction of the few, yet to be expoſed to the contumelies of the vulgar is harſh and uneaſie. This conſideration hath, I acknowledge, a great deal of Rhetorick, and I doubt prevails with not a few in our preſent caſe. I will therefore endeavour to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of it in theſe two points.

1. I affirm, That it is no real diſhonour, but a manly generoſity and a Chriſtian virtue to change our minds upon mature deliberation, and the evidence of better reaſon. Indeed to change we know not why, or meerly becauſe we are weary of old things, is a vitious levity; or upon new intereſts to eſpouſe new perſwaſions, is baſe and unworthy either of a Chriſtian or a Man: yet on the other ſide, obſtinately to maintain whatever we have aſſerted, is as far from Chriſtian ſtability and perſeverance, as it is from in-

ingenuity. That very temper which our Saviour requires in his Diſciples, and which is the preparatory diſpoſition to the entertainment of Chriſtianity, eſpecially conſiſts in a ſimplicity of mind; and an indifferency to comply with whatſoever ſhall beſt recommend it ſelf to our faculties. And whoſoever is not of this diſpoſition, it was meerly by chance that he became a Chriſtian; or whatſoever opinions he hath better than any other man, nothing is owing to his virtue, but his fortune; and he is not the better man, but had the happier Education. For ſince no man is infallible, nor hath an intuitive knowledge of things, he muſt either make himſelf a meer Machine to be filled and moved by others, and receive without diſcrimination whatſoever is inſtilled into him by others, that doth not think it becomes him to leave room for better reaſons, and further light in all ſuch matters as we ſpeak of, and where Almighty God hath not once for all expreſly delivered himſelf. And thoſe are not only the moſt ingenuous men, but ordinarily the moſt uſeful alſo, that are what they are, not by Inſtinct and the prejudices of Education, but by Conviction and Argument. In ſhort, he that reſolves never to change his opinion, nor hopes to be wiſer than

than he is, either will be alwayes a fool, or hath the fortune of ſuch an one, or both.

Now then, he that ſeeing Reaſon to incline him to take new meaſures, ſhall yet upon Secular conſiderations think fit not to own a change, may have the reputation of a *cunning* man, but never of an *honeſt*, and ſhall loſe more in the Judgement of wiſe men, than he ſhall gain with the vulgar.

2. Epecially let it be conſidered, how much the honour of our Religion is of more value than our Perſonal reputation, and how much that is concerned in the peaceable and obedient temper of all thoſe that pretend to it; and withal, what it ſuffers in defect of this: And ſurely a due ſenſe of theſe things will have ſuch weight with all thoſe that are ſincerely Chriſtian, as to depreſs and keep down the turgency of our phancy and vain glory.

It was an effectual courſe *Haman* took, *Eſther* 3. 8. (and he had wit in his malice,) when he deſigning to ruine the whole Church of the *Jews*, firſt undermines the reputation of

of their Profeſſion, delates their Religion as not fit for the protection of the Prince, and that it contained *Laws contrary to all people, and that they would not obey the Kings Laws.* There is nothing caſts ſo indeleble a blemiſh upon Religion as when the Profeſſors of it are turbulent, unperſwadable, ungovernable. When that which ſhould ſtrengthen the hands of the Magiſtrate, ſhall weaken them, when that which ſhould eaſe his care and ſave the labour of his Animadverſions, ſhall it ſelf awaken and raiſe his Jealouſie; when that which ſhould enact his Laws in the very Conſciences of men, ſhall pretend to abrogate or diſpenſe with them; when men ſhall ſmite and break the two Tables one againſt another, and put other limitations and conditions upon Princes than God hath, and pretend a revocation of the Broad Seal of Civil Authority by the Privy Signet of Religion: whereever this is done, that Prince or Magiſtrate had need be a very devout man indeed, that caſts a benign aſpect upon that Profeſſion which hath ſo malignant an influence upon his Government. And all conſidering men will with great reaſon doubt, whether that Religion be of God that gives ſuch trouble to his Vicegerent, and whether that will carry men to Heaven hereafter,

after, that makes tumults, confuſions and a Hell upon earth.

But I have ſaid ſo much to this buſineſs heretofore, when I conſidered the miſchiefs of Schiſm, that I ſhall need to ſay the leſs now. Only let me obſerve, That the more raiſed and elevated any Religion pretends to be, the more it profeſſes a Contempt of this world, the more it ſpeaks of Patience, Contentation, Humility, and the more it glories in the hopes of another world, ſtill the more horribly abſurd and contradictious will it be, that this ſhould give countenance to diſobedience and diſturbance of Government.

I have alſo noted before, that it was the great advantage Chriſtianity had for the planting it ſelf in the world, that it diſturbed no ſetled Form, made no noiſe or commotion, but fell like the dew of Heaven upon a Fleece of Wooll. Our Saviour himſelf was ſo careful of giving offence, that he not only gave no jealouſie to thoſe in poſſeſſion of the Government, but alſo abridged his own Liberty, rather than he would ſeem to retrench their Power. St. *Paul* when he was accuſed by an eloquent Orator *Tertullus*, Acts 24. 5. *as a mover of Sedition,*

dition, doth with equal eloquence disprove the charge, and detest the Crime. And that the generality of Christians were of the same temper and spirit, *Tertullian* gives ample testimony. *Externi sumus, & vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum*, &c. *cui bello non idonei*, &c. Apol. c. 37. *We want*, saith he, *neither numbers, nor Leaders, nor Spirit, to inable us for any attempt; but that we have learnt to* suffer *ill, and not to* do *it, to obey and submit, not to contend with our Rulers.* And *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Pagan Souldier in *Julian*'s Army, and therefore the more undeniable witness in the case, gives this short description of the Christian Religion, *Nil nisi justum suadet & lene: It is*, saith he, *compounded of nothing but mildness and innocency.* It makes men just and honest, it fills mens hearts with virtuous principles, but not their heads with troublesome niceties; It teaches men not to be troublers of the World, but to go quietly and inoffensively through it, with as little noise and provocation as is possible, and so to arrive at eternal rest and peace in Heaven. And as this is the

known glory of Chriſtianity in general, ſo it was peculiarly of the *Engliſh* Reformation in particular, as I ſhewed before. It was brought in by the Prince, not by the rout of people; it was eſtabliſht orderly by Law, did not force its way by popular tumult, and was truly what it ought to be, a revival of Primitive purity and ſimplicity. And it is infinite pity, that its glory ſhould afterwards be ſtained by the inſolence and impatience of thoſe that pretend to it. It is a great blot in the writings of Mr. *Calvin*, that after he had diſcourſed rarely well of the power of Princes and the duty of Subjects, in the laſt Chapter of his *Inſtitutions* and the one and thirtieth Paragraph, he undoes all again with an unhappy exception, in theſe words, *de privatis hominibus ſemper loquor:* A paſſage of that ill aſpect upon Government, that it is ſuſpected by ſome, and not altogether without cauſe, that moſt of the confuſions of Kingdoms which have happened ſince, and eſpecially the troubles of this Nation, have received incouragement, if not taken riſe from thence. But whether that be ſo or no, it is certain that it hath furniſht the Papiſts with a recrimination upon the Proteſtant Doctrine, when we have charged theirs

theirs as blowing a Trumpet to Sedition and Rebellion. And though the true Proteſtant Doctrine be as innocent, as theirs is guilty in this kind, yet if it can be objected againſt us, that our Churches are alwayes infeſted with Diviſions, and the States under which we live, imbroyled in troubles, we have reaſon to be concerned, fora ſmuch as we have no reaſon to expect that our Adverſaries will be ſo juſt or charitable, as to diſtinguiſh betwixt the faults of the Doctrine and the miſcarriages of thoſe that Profeſs it, but will be ſure to involve both in the diſhonour. For it cannot be, but that either the Seed muſt be very bad, that brings forth ſuch Fruit, or the Soil very corrupt, that makes good Seed ſo degenerate; that is, either the Religion muſt be very faulty, that fills men generally with ſo bad Principles, or at leaſt, the Men muſt be extreamly evil, that debauch good Doctrine. And whether ſoever of theſe two things be concluded on, (as it is certain one muſt and both may) we ill conſult either for our ſelves or our Profeſſion that by our diviſions, diſputes, turbulencies and diſobedience, make the aforeſaid dilemma inevitable. And all the wit and courage we ſhew in defending our private opinions, and maintain-

ing our ſeveral parties, when the common cauſe and intereſt is by this means rendred odious and contemptible, is but like the fooliſh ſollicitudé of him that ſhall be adorning his private Cabin, when the Ship is ſinking. And thoſe men have little cauſe to triumph in their particular ſucceſſes, who loſe to a common Enemy whatever they gain upon one another.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The danger by our Distractions and Divisions.

IF neither the consideration of the sin of Schism, nor of the dishonour to our Religion by our divisions will prevail to unite us, yet perhaps the apprehension of Danger may.

It was observed of old, that the Conquest of this Island by the *Romans* was facilitated by the Intestine divisions of the Inhabitants, and said, *dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*; whereas had they consulted in common, and made a joynt defence, they had doubtless either preserved their liberty, or at least sold it at a dearer rate. And we have too great cause to fear the Religious interests of this Nation now, may be endangered upon the same point that the Civil

were loſt then; I mean, that whileſt we contend with one another, and with our Rulers about little things, we loſe the main, and by the opportunity of our Diviſions and Subdiviſions, a common enemy break in upon us.

It is certain, that no advantage can more encourage the attempt or befriend the deſigns of our Adverſaries, than the preſent condition of our affairs; and therefore unleſs we could be ſo fond as to perſwade our ſelves we have no enemies, or ſo mad as to think them as ſecure and ſupine as our ſelves, it muſt be unreaſonable preſumption to think our ſelves ſafe in this diſtracted condition. But becauſe it is obſerved of *Engliſhmen*, that they generally (as conſcious to themſelves of their own undaunted courage in encountring dangers) are leſs vigilant againſt the approaches of them, I ſhall therefore for a concluſion, rather hazard the being accounted timorous my ſelf, than that others ſhould be ſecure and ſo ſurprized, and endeavour to unite the minds of all true Proteſtants of this Kingdom, by repreſenting the joynt danger by a threefold enemy ready to attacque them, *viz.* Atheiſm, Popery, Fanaticiſm.

1. *Athe-*

1. *Atheiſm.* He that hath not obſerved the prodigious growth and progreſs of this Monſter in this laſt Age, and what confidence it is arrived at above the proportion of former times, either hath lived to little purpoſe, having made no obſervation of what hath paſt by him, or is intolerably overweening to ſome private opinion.

Heretofore it was only the *fool* that *ſaid there was no God*; but now this name *Atheiſt*, ſpeaks a Wit and a man of more than ordinary ſagacity: And thoſe that were either ſo fooliſh or ſo abandoned of all reaſon and goodneſs as to doubt whether there was a God or no, yet were not ſo immodeſt as to profeſs their Infidelity, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, *they ſaid in their heart there was no God*, but made it not an Hypotheſis or a profeſt Tenet. Time was, that only ſome hated villain, ſome man of abject ſpirit and deſperate fortunes was thought capable of ſuch black impreſſions, and that nothing but the brawneſs of mens conſciences or the hopeleſneſs of their condition could betray them to but the ſuſpicions of ſuch a thing; and thoſe that had any taint of it,

fled the light, and were only to be found in Gaols and Brothel-houſes: Now the Atheiſt is become a Gallant, an Hector, and this *uncircumciſed Philiſtin* appears armed, *and defies the Armies of Iſrael.* The general contempt that ſuch men lay under was ſuch, that heretofore they were not thought fit to live in a Common-wealth, but now they have gotten ſuch heart as to think themſelves the only fit perſons to preſcribe Laws and Models of Government.

It is not uneaſie to unfold all the cauſes that have concurred to the unhappy growth of this extream evil; nor is it neceſſary that I ſhould now undertake it: yet I preſume I ſhall eaſily obtain the Readers pardon if I gratifie my own and his curioſity ſo far as to make a little digreſſion to obſerve the motion of ſo unuſual and prodigious a Phænomenon.

And in the firſt place it is an Obſervation of the Lo d *Bacon*'s, *That Superſtition in the foregoing Age, uſually becomes Atheiſm in the ſucceeding generation.* And ſo it is likely the ſeeds were ſown in the late times, though the unhappy fruit appears but now.

For

For when witty men shall observe that the generality of those that pretend to the highest pitch of Religion, do either represent God Almighty so incredibly and contrary to the natural notions men have of him, or Religion so apishly and ridiculously (as is the Genius of Superstition to do) It will be very ready and easie to them to conclude, there is no reality either in the one or the other: Especially if those happen to make the observation, whose vicious and desperate courses have made it become their interest that there should be no such things. When men shall see the most absurd Propositions, and such as they are sure cannot be true, received with the same credulity, and recommended and contended for with the same zeal that the most certain and most essential points of Religion are or should be, what can be more natural, than to think those things alike true, that are alike imbraced and have equal stress laid upon them? And then the result is plain, that seeing some are notoriously false, therefore it seems more than probable to them that the rest are so too. It is in this case as in the hearing of Civil Causes, when it appears to the Judges, that there is false play made use of and some suborned Witnesses brought to

give

give evidence, they are hereby prejudiced againſt the reſt.

And (which is further conſiderable) it is very probable that thoſe very men that were formerly ſunk into the mire of the aforeſaid Superſtitions, may afterwards when they happen to emerge out of their deluſions, make up a conſiderable part of the Atheiſts themſelves. For by the ſame reaſon we gave before, theſe men finding themſelves cheated and impoſed upon even in theſe very points that they were as confident of, as of the Articles of the Creed, grow hence to ſuſpect even *them* too, foraſmuch as with them it hath no better foundation than the things that now are apparently falſe: And thus from too large and prodigious a Creed they come to have no Faith at all. When they diſcover that they believed many things without ground, they think now they have ground to believe nothing, and from fierce and hot Bigots, become cold Scepticks and Atheiſts.

In the ſecond place I ſuſpect the lewd practices that have gone under the cloak and countenance of Religion, have had a great

great hand in this mischief also. That not only the prodigious Faith, but the monstrous Life of some great pretenders to Religion hath made men scorn and abhorr the very notion of it. When not only mens ridiculous Follies, but also their Vices, their Pride, and Passion, and Rancour shall be father'd upon the Spirit of God (as we know when and where such things have been done) when men shall seek God for all the Villanies they are resolved to commit, when they make long Prayers to devour Widows houses, and proclaim a Fast that they may kill and take possession; when Religion shall be prostituted to all bad designs, and *in nomine Domini incipit omne malum*: when, I say, the most specious Profession is a cloke for the vilest Knavery; It cannot be much wondered if such men as I described before, be inclined by these things to think there is no reality in any of the discourses of God and Religion. For as, if a man were to observe whether the Sun was risen upon the Hemisphere, he would direct his eyes to the tops of Mountains, expecting to see him displaying his beams first upon them that are nearest Heaven: So a man would think if there were

were any ſuch thing as Religion and a ſenſe of Divinity amongſt men, it ſhould be found amongſt thoſe that have alwayes God in their mouths, and ſuch a Garb of Religion upon them. But if he find himſelf diſappointed here, and that theſe men that pretend ſo high, have as great Senſualities, Paſſions, Covetouſneſs, Malice as other men, he will deſpair of finding it any where, and conclude with *Brutus*, *O virtus, quæſivi te ut rem, ſed tantùm merum nomen es*, that there is no ſuch thing at all.

3. To the aforeſaid Cauſes we may well add the perpetual Janglings and Diſputes between Profeſſors of Religion, as not only making Religion unlovely, but even calling it wholly into queſtion. When ſo many ſhall tell us there is ſuch a place and ſtate as Heaven and a World to come, but every one tells us a ſeveral way thither; witty men who know that all cannot be true, but all may be falſe, think it not comporting with their diſcretion to take the pains of the journey, till the Guides ſhall be agreed of the way. The diſagreement of the two rank Elders in their teſtimony againſt *Suſannah*'s chaſtity, whileſt one ſaid the

the fault was done under one kind of Tree and the other under another, discovered her Innocency and their Hypocrisie.

It is true indeed, there may and must be diversities of apprehensions in several points of Christianity, whilest men are of different capacities, and this need not, nor if things be modestly carryed, will give any just advantage to the Atheist. But when every private opinion is made necessary to salvation, and men pronounce damnation against one another upon every little diversity, when they make as many Religions as there are Opinions, and as many Wayes to Heaven, as there are Notions amongst men, it cannot be hoped, but that the cold Sceptick should be incouraged in his Neutrality.

4. But if to all these we consider with what rancour and malice the several Parties prosecute one another, what odious and defamatory Libels, and bitter Invectives they write one against another, wherein all the secret follies of each party are blazed and published, all the errors aggravated, all the Opinions racked to confess blasphemy in their owners and defenders; one party said to

to make God a Tyrant, the other to deny his Wiſdom, or Soveraignty; the one ſide accuſed of Idolatry, the other of Rebellion: he, I ſay, that conſiders how uſual all this is, and how ready all thoſe that have no good mind to Religion are to catch up the darts that each of the parties caſt at each other, and make uſe of them againſt both, and with what ſeeming Reaſon they conclude, that the Confeſſion of the Parties againſt each other, and their mutual Impeachments of each other ſhould argue the guilt of both, and obſerves that all the defamatory Sermons and Libels that men write in heat and paſſion againſt each other, (wherein they charge folly, blaſphemy and nonſenſe upon each other reciprocally) at laſt rebound or are retorted upon the wheel of Religion, cannot be altogether to ſeek of the riſe of the Atheiſm of this Age. But whether theſe be the principal cauſes of the great appearance which Atheiſm makes in this Age above the proportion of other times, or whether there be other of a more latent and malignant influence, I ſhall not further enquire at preſent, ſince it is manifeſt, that the matter of Fact is true, and that being ſo, the danger to Religion cannot

not be obſcure. We have reaſon therefore better to govern our paſſions and lay aſide our animoſities for the future, and to unite our forces in an uniform order of Religion againſt this common enemy, leſt the gravity and piety of this Nation end in Buffoonry, and our beſt heat and ſpirits being ſpent upon one another, or againſt our Governours, the mortal ſymptome of a cold clammy ſtupid Atheiſm ſucceed.

2. *Popery*, is another *Hannibal ad portas*, an enemy that watches but till our Diviſions ſhall open the Gates to him. I hope I need not exaggerate the formidableneſs of Popery to thoſe that remember either eighteen thouſand ſouls diſpatcht out of the World by the hands of the common Hangman in about three years time in the *Low Countreyes* under the Government of the Duke of *Alva*, or the *French* Maſſacre, or Queen *Maries* Reign in *England*, or the *Gunpowder Treaſon*. There was a clauſe in our Litany in *Henry* the Eighths and *Edward* the Sixths time, *From the tyranny of the Biſhop of* Rome *and his deteſtable enormities, Good Lord deliver us*; and upon what reaſons ſoever it was ſince left out, it was not

not certainly, becauſe either their Errors are leſs enormous, or their Spirits leſs cruel; but God forbid, that becauſe they at preſent hide their Teeth, we ſhould think they cannot or will not bite, for if we ſhould be ſo good natur'd as to warm this Snake in our boſomes that now pretends to have neither power nor will to hurt us, I doubt we ſhould quickly find it to reſume its malice and poiſon together with its warmth and ſtrength.

If any one ſhall be ſo hardy as to apprehend there is no danger of its return in this Nation, I pray God his foreſight be as great as his courage; but he that conſiders the following Circumſtances will think it adviſeable not to be over ſecure. For,

1. It is not with this party as with any other Sect whatſoever, theſe have a Foreign Head and great intereſts abroad, the Pope and all the Popiſh Princes to unite, to direct, to animate and imploy them, which muſt needs render them very dangerous to any State that is inclined to middle counſels, that is, that doth not either effectually pleaſe them, or effectually diſable them.

them. And upon this account the *Turkish* Sultan (who hath scarcely any need to learn reason of State from any body) uses the *Latin* Christians with greater caution and severity under his Dominion than the *Greek*, because he accounts the former alwayes dangerous upon account of their Forreign Head and Alliance.

2. We cannot but observe how diligent they have been of late, how full of projects, and how erect their minds with expectation of some success. They heretofore walked in Masquerade, disguised themselves sometimes in the habit of one Sect and sometimes of another; but of late they have had the confidence to lay off their disguise and play a more open game: And such are the numbers of their Emissaries, so desperate and daring are the Bigots of that party, and so close and crafty are their Insinuations, that we have little reason to think our selves out of danger, especially whilest we have such Divisions and Distractions amongst our selves as at once both incourage them to attempt upon us, and also furnish them with a very popular argument to use with soft-minded and weakly principled Protestants to

draw them off from us, namely, the consideration of the Divisions in our Church, and the perfect Unity in theirs.

For prevention of all which, there seems no way so effectual as that we learn, if not to submit our private quarrels to the publick Magistrate, yet to publick safety, lest whilest the Gamesters quarrell, those that sit by sweep the stakes. And certainly it's more adviseable to sacrifice our Opinions to our Safety, than our Religion and Liberty to our Humours and Opinions. And although blessed be God, we have now a Prince to whom the Protestant Religion came sealed with his Fathers Blood, and who in his own unhappy Exile had however this advantage to be well aware of the cheats and impostures, as well as the designs of that Faction: yet if ever it should be our fortune to have a Prince indifferent in Religion, and who preferred his own quiet before the Civil or Spiritual Interests of his people; the unreasonable petulancies we betray, our unractableness by fair means, and our endless disputes and unnecessary scrupulosities would tempt such a Prince (growing weary of the burden of our unquietness, and

and despairing otherwise of bringing us to obedience) to put us under the insolence of that hard-hearted *Pharaoh*, whose little Finger would prove heavier than the Loyns of all our present Governours; and set *Ægyptian* Task-masters over us to break our Spirits by bitter bondage; which Gods Mercy and our Wisdom for the future will I hope prevent.

But if we should escape both these dangers, yet our Divisions and Distractions continuing, there is a third danger that I do not see how it is avoidable. And that is,

3. *Fanaticism.* For it is not imaginable, but that the Church growing into contempt, and Laws into daily neglect, that things can long stand at this pass, but some change or other must ensue; and if Popery come not in to chastize our follies, nor Atheism (that damp of the bottomless Pit) come over us and stifle all our life and warmth of Religion, but that we must (the aforesaid causes remaining and daily increasing) fall into a Religious Phrensie, or that raging Calenture I last named. What that is, and what the insufferable mischiefs of it are, I need

not repreſent. It is, in ſhort, inſtead of Church Government to have a Spiritual Anarchy, where the hotteſt head is made the higheſt Governour; where Pride and Impudence are the only qualifications of a Preacher; where Humour is called Conſcience, and Novelty Religion. This, for ought I can ſee, is like to be our condition, if neither the Atheiſt nor Papiſt ſucceed in their projects. But if any man ſhall be ſo fond as to hope we ſhall not fall thus low, but may ſtay in Presbytery, I ſhall ſay but this, Let ſuch perſon conſider how few and inconſiderable that party is, compared with the vaſt numbers of Quakers, Ranters, Fifth-Monarchy-men, Anabaptiſts, Antinomians, *&c.* and how little acceptable the Presbyterian way or intereſt is to any of thoſe Factions, and therefore how unlikly to be ſet up by their means: But eſpecially let it be remembred that when that Party had the Ball at their foot, they were not able to keep it, but loſt it and the Goal too, to thoſe more numerous and adventurous Gameſters. I therefore ſay again, I cannot apprehend, but that there muſt be a better union and complyance with the Church of *England*, or I do not ſee it poſſible, but we

muſt

muſt fall into one or other of the aforeſaid dangers. And the calamity will then be ſo great which way ſoever we fall, that I proteſt I think every honeſt minded Proteſtant ought to be inclined to bear with cheerfulneſs whatſoever burdens our Superiours can be ſuſpected capable of impoſing upon us, rather than make experiment of the danger.

Conclusion.

I Have now adventured to stretch forth my hand to stay the tottering of the Ark, and to cast in my Mite to the publick Treasury for the service of the Church, which I hope God and Good men will accept of.

Of what efficacy the foregoing Considerations shall be, is at the mercy of the Reader. But if it please Almighty God to give him such candour and so unprejudicate a mind in the reading, as I call him to witness I have been sensible of in the writing, I do not then despair but they will prevail with all *Englishmen* that love the Protestant Religion better than their own humour, to Conform to the Church and

and Laws eſtabliſht; or at leaſt that they ſhall ſeem of ſuch weight, as that a few ſcruples ſhall not be thought a counter-ballance to them.

Yet the more to aſſure this ſo deſirable an Iſſue, I will crave leave for a Concluſion, humbly to recommend theſe following particulars.

1. That all thoſe that are zealous of the honour and intereſt of the Church of *England*, will (the more effectually to demonſtrate the excellency of it, and to ſtop the mouth of ſlander,) oblige themſelves to a ſingular holineſs of life. Let us be aſhamed that ſince we pretend to have, and have really, a better way of Religion, not to have ſo much better Lives as we have better Principles. Let us diſdain that any petty Sect whatſoever ſhould outgo us in that which is the great end of Church Society. When thoſe that bring prejudice to our publick Worſhip, reproach it as a cold Service, Let us labour to have our hearts invigorated with ſuch a ſenſe of Devotion by it, as may not only confute the ſlander, but maintain a ſpiritual heat

and life of Godlineſs in all our converſation. For let us aſſure our ſelves, this is that the credit of any Profeſſion depends upon, when we have uſed all the Arguments, and the beſt Vindications of our ſelves and our Church, it is Holineſs of life is the beſt and moſt prevalent Apology.

2. That ſince for the bringing others to Conformity, we muſt perſwade them to forgo ſome part of their natural Liberties, foraſmuch as otherwiſe they can come under no Government whatſoever, but muſt be either Outlaws or abſolute Princes: To the end, I ſay, that we may prevail with them to deny themſelves in ſome things for the publick good, we ſhould do well to give them example in our own ſelf-denyal and abridging our own liberty in condeſcenſion to them in ſuch things as are not the matter of Law. And that we will not outrun the Laws to contradict and vex them, but comply with them in what we may without ſin. This is that Charity and avoiding Scandal the Apoſtle ſo earneſtly recommends, of which I have ſpoken in the Conſiderations. And the conſequence

is

is plain; If it be their duty to reſtrain themſelves in the uſe of that Liberty God hath left them, in complyance with the Laws and Magiſtrate, and for the ſake of publick Peace and Order; then it is our duty to reſtrain our ſelves in the uſe of that Liberty the Laws of God and Man have left us, for the ſake of the ſame Peace and in Charity to our Brethren. Beſides that nothing works upon mens ingenuity like Ceſſion and Yielding, and peculiarly with *Engliſhmen*, as I have heretofore obſerved.

3. That we uſe no provocation or exaſperation towards Diſſenters, nor countenance thoſe inconſiderable perſons that have no other way to ſhew their Zeal to the Church, but by reviling and vexing thoſe that differ from it. It were good all Governours of the Church did (and I hope they do) imitate *Memnon* the General for *Darius* againſt *Alexander*, who when he found one of his Souldiers inſtead of Darts caſting Scoffs at the Enemy, tells him, You are not entertained *ut maledicas ſed ut pugnes*. For beſides that this carriage where ever it is, is but counted a ſtrong argu-

argument of a weak Cauſe, it ſtirs up the mud of mens paſſions, clouds their underſtandings, and by repreſenting men worſe than they are, tempts them to be worſe than they would be: And if I ſee I ſhall be alwayes noſed with my former Ignorance and folly, I am deprived of one of the greateſt encouragements to forſake it.

4. Though I have as I hope ſufficiently proved in the foregoing Diſcourſe, that there is no abſolute neceſſity of making any abatement of the Legal terms of Communion with this Church, foraſmuch as nothing is required or impoſed by the Conſtitution thereof, but what may be ſubmitted to without ſin; And therefore I will not be guilty of the preſumption to preſcribe to my Superiours either one way or other in that matter: Yet I humbly ſuggeſt, that if any ſuch thing ſhall be thought fit to be done out of condeſcenſion to the Non-conformiſts, and to gain them to the Church, it may be done freely and ſpontaneouſly, not as extorted either by their importunity or the neceſſity of affairs. For whatſoever is gotten the latter way, is not accounted yielded, but won,

won, *nec amicos parat*, *nec inimicos tollit*, it paſſes no obligation upon men, but rather incourages their importunity, and confirms their obſtinacy. And there is nothing that wiſe men do or ought to reſent more, than the miſcarriage of their favours, ſince thereby they loſe not only what they grant, but their reputation too.

The Council of *Trent* therefore would hearken to no terms nor Propoſitions on the behalf of the Proteſtants, leſt they ſhould by ſome few drops of Conceſſion, increaſe their thirſt of more. But had they had as much of the *innocency of the Dove* as of the *ſubtilty of the Serpent*, or been as *ſincere* as they were *wiſe* in their generation, they ſhould have prevented all importunities by a liberal Grant of what was fit and juſt, and by ſuch an act of Goodneſs and Charity they might either have wrought upon the ingenuity and moderated the heat of the other Party, or at leaſt, having done what became them, they ſhould then have had good ground peremptorily to have refuſed whatſoever ſhould have been arrogantly demanded. But they (as I have

I have ſaid) wiſely enough in their way, conſidering that if they once came to acknowledge any thing due to the Proteſtants, muſt be forced upon the ſame terms to yield them more than they were willing to part with, and indeed little leſs than the whole, reſolved therefore to yield nothing at all.

But as the caſe of our Church is not like theirs, ſo there is no neceſſity we ſhould make uſe of the ſame Politicks; for where there is nothing ſinful in the Conſtitution, nothing can be required to be abated but upon the terms of Prudence and Compaſſion; and if it ſhall happen that thoſe Arguments be thought fit to be heard, it is great pitty in that caſe that the reſolution ſhould not be ſo carried, as that it may be evident to all, that thoſe cauſes only had influence upon the effect.

If theſe things be conſidered by thoſe that favour the Church, and the foregoing Conſiderations be impartially weighed by the Proteſtant Diſſenters from it, I for my part ſhall conceive good hope that the Clergy

Clergy of *England* ſhall recover its antient and due Veneration, our Churches be better filled than the Conventicles, a bleſſed Symphony in our publick Prayers, and an Univerſal Peace, Love and Goodwill be reſtored in this divided and diſtracted Church and Nation. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

FINIS.